



Arm The Spirit

Autonomist/Anti-Imperialist Journal



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Freedom For Mumia Abu-Jamal! Freedom For All Political Prisoners Worldwide!

The End Of The Red Army Fraction

Documents From Political Prisoners In Europe And The Middle East

ETA Resumes Armed Struggle In Euskadi



Index

Page 2: Index and ATS Internet Resources
Page 3: ATS Introduction/Editorial
Page 4: On The Murder Of Horst-Ludwig Meyer And The Arrest Of Andrea Klump In Vienna and a letter from Andrea Klump
Pages 5-6: Arrests And Raids Against The "Revolutionary Cells (RZ)" and Repression Against Anti-NATO Activists In Italy
Pages 7-9: Action Directe: "Political Prisoners And The Question Of Violence"
Pages 10-12: Collective Biography Of The Action Directe Prisoners
Pages 13-17: Interview With The CCC Prisoners Collective
Pages 18-20: A Brief History Of The Armed Struggle Of GRAPO In Spain
Page 21: Freedom For Francisco Brotons!
Page 22: Interview With GRAPO Political Prisoner Eva Alonso Arce and March 8th communique from the GRAPO women's prisoner collective "Lina Odea"
Page 23: European Political Prisoner List
Page 24: Former INLA POW Tony O'Hara Looks Back On The H-Block Struggles
Pages 25-26: IRSP: Teach Na Nailte Project
Page 27: A Brief Introduction To The Communist Prisoners Collective "Wotta Sitta"
Pages 28-29: "For The Liberation From Oppression And Capitalist Exploitation" - a letter from the Wotta Sitta collective
Pages 30-31: Conference For The Freedom Of Political Prisoners Around The World
Pages 32-34: Interview With Ahmad Qatamesh
Page 35: Interview With George Habash, General Secretary Of The PFLP
Page 36: Interview With Lawyer Ahmet Yuksel, Trial Observer At The DHKP-C Proceedings In Germany
Page 37: Statement From The DHKP-C European Organization
Pages 38-40: Interview With DHKP-C Prisoners
Pages 41-42: Interview With Former ETA Political Prisoner
Pages 43-45: ETA Ceasefire Communique
Page 46: ETA Communique Announcing The End Of The Ceasefire
Pages 47-52: Interview With ETA - May 1999
Pages 53: Herri Batasuna Leaders Freed
Pages 54-56: Interview with RAF Political Prisoner Helmut Pohl - June 1996
Pages 57-61: "The Urban Guerrilla Is History" - The Final RAF Communique
Page 62: Interview with Former June 2nd Movement prisoner Till Meyer
Pages 63-64: "We Are Not Political Idiots" - a letter from RAF prisoner Rolf Clemens Wagner and A Final Few Words On The RAF from Autonome Antifa (M)

Arm The Spirit Resources On The Internet

E-mail: ats@etext.org & armthespirit@mailcity.com
WWW: <http://burn.ucsd.edu/~ats>

ATS-L is a listserv which carries articles and news items from Arm The Spirit and other left-radical organizations on subjects such as political prisoners, anti-fascism, the struggle against patriarchy and homophobia, national liberation struggles, armed anti-imperialist/anti-capitalist resistance, and more. If you would like to subscribe to this list, send a message with "subscribe ats-l" in the subject header and your e-mail address in the message body to <ats@etext.org> The archive for the list can be found at: <<http://burn.ucsd.edu/archives/ats-l>>

the goals and politics of the PKK and other Kurdish revolutionary groups, and to thereby increase international solidarity. <<http://burn.ucsd.edu/~ats/berxwedian.html>>

Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) Solidarity Page: This page contains news, articles, interviews, historical documents and more about Peru's MRTA, a revolutionary-left guerrilla movement. <<http://burn.ucsd.edu/~ats/mrta.htm>>

Freedom For Sabine, Axel And Harald!: Our solidarity page with the imprisoned German comrades accused of being members of the clandestine armed groups, the Revolutionary Cells and Rote Zora.

<<http://burn.ucsd.edu/~ats/razzia.html>>

KURD-L is an English-language listserv with news and articles about the national liberation struggle in Kurdistan. The list carries translations from Kurdish and Turkish news agencies, articles from solidarity organizations, press statements from the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK), articles about the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), war news from the People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan (ARGK), as well as mainstream media accounts of the ongoing war in Kurdistan. If you would like to subscribe to this list, send a message with "subscribe kurd-l" in the subject header and your e-mail address in the message body to <ats@etext.org> The archive for the list can be found at: <<http://burn.ucsd.edu/archives/kurd-l>>

Berxwedian - Documents From The Kurdish National Liberation Struggle: This page is a collection of articles and translations of primary source documents from the Kurdish national liberation movement. Our aim in assembling this page is to help create a better understanding of

Publications Page: This is our on-line archive of various documents from a number of different revolutionary struggles and movements. At this time it is rather sparse in content but we do have such sections as: "Resistance Means Attack" - Armed Struggle In Western Europe and the important theoretical piece "Three Into One" written by Klaus Viehmann and translated into english by us. In the coming months we hope to include a number of out-of-print books such as "Re-evaluation Of The Urban Guerrilla" by Abraham Guillen, "Strike One To Educate One Hundred - The Rise Of The Red Brigades In Italy In The 1960s and 1970s", "Fire And Flames: A History Of The German Autonomist Movement From 1968-1988" and "Prairie Fire: The Politics Of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism" <<http://burn.ucsd.edu/~ats/publicat.htm>>

Back Issues

We have compiled the first 12 issues (over 100 pages) of Arm The Spirit (June 1990 - May 1992) into one set. We're selling it for \$10 (postage included). Issues 13,14/15 and 16 are also still available and cost \$4 each (postage included). We also published 4 issues of an Info-Bulletin between 1994-5 and one issue of a Kurdistan Solidarity Bulletin. Each one is still available and costs \$1 (postage included).



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Arm The Spirit Ten Years On...

A decade has passed since the first issue of "Arm The Spirit - For Revolutionary Resistance!" was published. Ten years on and a new millennium is a good a time as any to reflect back and look at what we've accomplished with this project and where we hope to go.

In the late 80s a small group of us had been doing solidarity work around political prisoners in the U.S., particularly around anti-imperialist guerrillas - the "Ohio 7" and the "Resistance Conspiracy Case" - who were on trial for seditious conspiracy and other charges. At that time there was a few magazines (Resistance, The Insurgent, Breakthrough...) that published documents from armed groups but they came out infrequently and some were in the process of ceasing publication (indeed none of them are around today). Also much of the solidarity work around the trials mostly consisted of a "right to a fair trial", denouncing repressive measures in the courtroom, etc. We wanted to do more than this in our solidarity work by focussing on the political aspect of the armed struggle by disseminating documents from the armed groups and other related material. So in June of 1990 we started with a small 4-page bulletin that quickly grew in size over the next few years.

The aim of 'Arm The Spirit' was never to place excessive political importance on armed struggle, even though the content of the magazine was largely comprised of communiques from guerrilla organizations and discussions about the aims and means of armed resistance. But we felt that there was a need, particularly in North America, for a publication which offered a forum for such information. Although most clandestine resistance in North America had been defeated by state repression by the mid-1980s, the armed left was still very much alive and well in Europe when ATS began publishing. Early issues of ATS, for example, devoted a great deal of space to the armed anti-racist actions of the Dutch organization RARA, communiques from Germany's Red Army Fraction (RAF) and the Revolutionary Cells/Rote Zora (RZ), the Basque organization ETA and the Spanish guerrilla GRAPO, and so on. We wanted the left in North America to be informed about the actions by, the politics of, and the discussions within such movements.

But of course, we also provided coverage of other forms of militant struggle, such as the squatters' movement and actions against biotechnology, for example, and we always placed a great emphasis on solidarity with political prisoners and prisoners of war.

In addition to publishing the ATS journal and occasional info-bulletins, we also published other materials on

certain occasions. For example, when the Kurdish liberation struggle led by the PKK was at its peak in 1992-93, we published a separate "Kurdistan Solidarity Bulletin". We also produced pamphlets on various guerrilla organizations, such as the RAF and the RZ, to distribute at political events. Our ideas have always been much larger than our budget, however, and many projects never made it off our harddrive and onto paper. Such unfinished works include "Fire And Flames: A History Of The German Autonomist Movement", a book which we translated but were unable to publish. Several pamphlets as well were never completed, usually due to a lack of funds.

Without dwelling upon the collapse of the "real existing socialism" and so on, it goes without saying that the political situation changed dramatically during the 1990s. This had an effect on our publication as well, in that most of the movements which formed the bulk of our content in the early-1990s had either disbanded or disappeared by the mid-1990s. Most of the armed left in Europe gave up the fight, and scores of national liberation movements signed "peace accords" which brought guerrilla struggle to an end in many parts of the world. These changes, as well as our eventual shift to online publishing, brought about some changes in the work of Arm The Spirit.

ATS as an organization began utilizing e-mail and the internet for communication purposes as early as 1992, and by 1995 we had established a basic web site and two online e-mail news lists: ATS-L, a general news list for articles and discussions concerning left-radical political movements, armed resistance, political prisoners, and so on; and KURD-L, a list devoted specifically to the Kurdish national liberation struggle and the PKK. We are proud to say that we have consistently maintained both of these free news lists for 5 years now, with all postings archived and accessible on the web. Several hundred people are subscribed to these lists, with more subscription requests coming almost on a daily basis. (These online projects were made possible by the generous assistance of the comrades of the BURN! collective in California and the Etext collective in Michigan.)

It was never our intention to become solely an online information collective. There are many contradictions and limitations involved in using the internet, such as the lack of access by many groups and organizations outside the metropoles, not to mention the fact that political prisoners cannot participate online. But being consistently active on the internet for several years has helped us to establish new contacts and solidify others. And on some occasions, the effects of our work have been felt well outside the narrow confines of the radical-left. For example, immediately after the MRTA unit "Commando Edgar Sanchez" took over the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima in December 1996, in one of the most daring guerrilla actions of the decade, we immediately set

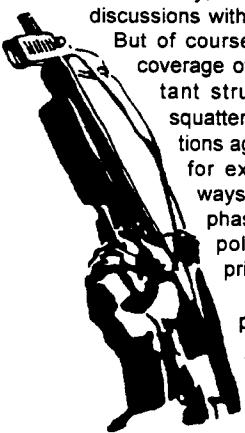


up an English-language solidarity site, intending to provide news and updates on what we expected to be a very short-lived event. As the weeks went on, however, our site became an important source of information and attracted tens of thousands of visitors, "thanks" in part to exposure in the capitalist media (CNN, The Wall Street Journal, etc.). Now, of course, web sites devoted to revolutionary movements are all over the Net, but at that time such sites were still relatively new.

As ATS enters the year 2000, our aim is to continue on with our work as much as possible. We slowly have resumed hardcopy publishing, while at the same time maintaining our online presence. We are also looking forward to continuing our cooperation with other projects, such as Antifa Forum, a collection of groups providing information on militant anti-fascism.

With this issue, the first in over 5 years, we had to make a hard decision of what to include. We easily could have filled a couple hundred pages but that was logically impossible, so we decided to focus on a narrow selection of documents and information on and from European political prisoners and guerrilla organizations. In a way this is a return to our roots as we're the only group to be publishing this kind of material in North America. In particular we felt it was important to publish the RAF's final communiqué and related documents, as well as ETA's return to armed struggle. We hope to have another issue out by the summer and in it we'll publish material that we had to leave out of this one. This next issue will focus on political prisoners in the U.S., the guerrilla struggle in Colombia, the splintering of the Kurdish national liberation movement and several perspectives on the Irish "peace process".

We hope that our distribution and translation of news and political discussions is useful for the left in North America. Information is only power if it is put into use. If movements continually pass on their histories and their discussions, then we can avoid having to re-invent the wheel as new highpoints of political activity arise. Most importantly, we plan to continue to provide a non-sectarian forum for a variety militant movements and struggles, from a variety of perspectives and locations, based on the slogan "Solidarity Is A Weapon!".



On The Murder Of Horst-Ludwig Meyer And The Arrest Of Andrea Klump In Vienna

On Wednesday, September 15, 1999, Horst-Ludwig Meyer was shot and killed by WEGA police units in Vienna and Andrea Klump was arrested. According to the media, members of the public were involved in the arrest and murder. Interior Minister Schlogl spoke on TV of an investigative success, and he heaped praise on the witnesses, the motorcyclist who aided in the chase, and the police officers involved. According to official statements on the events, it was said that members of the public had reported "suspicious" individuals to the police. Calling people "suspicious" is a part of criminalization. Anyone who doesn't fit into the social "norm" can be "suspicious". What was suspicious about Andrea and Horst was that they often met each other on the same street corner and were dressed in baseball caps and sunglasses. One witness told police they was afraid of being attacked by such people in their home. For years now, media reports have created fear among the general public with tales of "organized crime", "the East Bloc maffia", "Black drug dealers", and "terrorism". The state response [in Austria] has been more weapons for the police, wiretapping, the Schengen Agreement, and joining NATO. At the same time, citizens are called on to keep an eye on and denounce others. Media headlines which re-

port on the RAF [Red Army Fraction] routinely use such phrases as "trail of blood" and "cold blooded killers".

The RAF was formed from the student and opposition movements of the 1960s. During demonstrations against the re-armament of West Germany, against the Vietnam War, and against the Shah's regime in Iran, police used utter brutality against demonstrators. In the 1950s and 1960s, liberation movements arose in many countries in the Three Continents against colonial powers and attempts by the USA to secure its own economic and military power. In Vietnam, the communist guerrilla forces struggled since 1946 against the colonial French regime. (...) In 1959, the Cuban revolution succeeded against the USA. In many Latin American nations, guerrilla organizations took up the struggle against military dictatorships backed by the USA. In Namibia, SWAPO fought against the apartheid regime. In the USA itself, a civil rights movement arose against racial discrimination. Mass uprisings resulted. In 1966, the Black Panther Party was founded as a Black self-defense organization. In 1971, the Palestinian organization 'Black September' was founded. The RAF oriented its internationalist struggle against imperialism and the class society, and it attacked, in its own country, the eco-

nomic bosses, the NATO military, and the NATO bases who were working against these liberation movements.

Media reports on the actions and attacks by the RAF were designed to prevent critical publicity and solidarity, in order to isolate guerrilla groups and armed resistance from the general public and destroy them. But we will not let ourselves be divided or muted. All people who dream of a life in freedom, equality, and solidarity, all those who organize against sexism, racism, and capitalism, must consider the possibilities and contradictions of armed struggle and military actions. Several things about the arrest and murder are unclear to us: Allegedly, one person filmed "two suspicious persons" for an extended period of time. This black-and-white amateur video was broadcast on TV. We have our doubts about the origin of this film. We can well imagine that this situation was staged after-the-fact. Newspapers spoke first of a female witness, then of a male witness. The question is, was there really a month-long observation of Horst and Andrea by someone from the general public, or were they being observed by the police for a long time? Also unclear are the reports of possible contacts with the 'Verfassungsschutz' [the German intelligence agency, known as the VS]. According to the media, Andrea supposedly contacted the VS in 1996. The media are unclear about whether this contact was concerning a "return to legality". If there was a contact made to the VS, then the murder and arrest can be seen as part of the true anti-insurgency efforts of the VS. An article published in 'Standard' on September 17, 1999 mentioned one VS report which "cast doubt upon the actual membership" of Andrea and Horst in the RAF. Nevertheless, their photos were on international wanted posters for 15 years. In this way, a "reality of the ruling powers" has been constructed to deceive the public. (...) Now Andrea is being made to pay for her political convictions by being put behind bars. Austrian authorities are preparing to charge Andrea with "resisting arrest", "using a false ID", and "attempted murder". The police are investigating unsolved robberies as well with the aim of pinning them on Andrea. As part of the political investigations, Austrian, Italian, and German police officials held a summit meeting in Vienna. (...) Andrea has refused to make any statements to the police. (...) The police are now checking into who Andrea and Horst had contact with. In other words, they will observe who calls the murder of Horst what it really was, a "murder", and who supports Andrea in prison. We must not let such repression keep us from providing public solidarity.

In our daily lives, we all experience the violence of economic exploitation, sexism, racism, of isolation, competition, and destruction. Some people have decided to fight against this

"The Police Did Not Know Who We Were"

A Letter From Andrea Klump

I was very happy to see this text. The women who wrote it have brought the questions and speculations about the shooting of Horst and my arrest back down to earth politically. This political relationship is also a very human one: Horst has not been sterilized into an icon, and I have not been put into an unwelcome situation. I value this a lot.

Horst and I knew for years about the "drop-out" program ['Aussteigerprogramm'] of the German intelligence agency and of the efforts of one so-called Mr. Benz. Neither Horst nor I ever had any intention of kissing their feet. That's how we interpreted their offer, since they weren't really concerned with who had or hadn't done what, particularly after the breakup of the Soviet Union and all the changes associated with that.

For Horst and for me, that would have been a betrayal of our own, our common, history. We didn't want to become complicit in the shaking of heads, deadened by hunger and the yearning for another world. Remaining true to our own history is all that remains for the isolated left. This position is also an expression of the misery of the German left, which was already isolated in history, because in Germany there has always been a

vacuum in which political movement took place. The problem is, this was always quickly turned into ideology.

The political climate of fear and the willingness to denounce others is connected to the problem of the modern mass media: In an age when the consumer society is filled with the latest technological gadgets, like cell phones and video cameras, which are available to everyone, people have the means at their disposal to be executives of the system. The police did not know who we were. Horst was killed in a shootout which he actively participated in. It's not only the September 17, 1999 edition of 'Standard' which "cast doubt upon the actual membership" of Horst and me in the RAF. Those doubts are real.

"Never forget, now is not the time to achieve victories, but rather to fight against defeats."
(B. Brecht)

Andrea Klump
November 1999

(Source: 'So Oder So', the publication of *Libertad!*, Nr.5 - January 2000; Translated by Arm The Spirit)

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Arrests And Raids Against The "Revolutionary Cells (RZ)"

On Sunday, December 19, 1999, a large number of Berlin police stormed the Mehringhof complex in Kreuzberg. Led by anti-terrorist units and backed by federal investigators, a total of 1,000 cops took part in the raid. The alternative center was searched from 6:00am to 6:00pm. At the same time, private homes in Berlin and Frankfurt were raided as well and two men and one woman were arrested. In the Mehringhof, police were searching for several tons of explosives, but nothing was found. Instead, the police left behind about 100,000 German marks in damage to the center's walls, doors, and so on.

Those arrested in Berlin were Axel H. (49) and Harald G. (51), both of whom worked with projects in the Mehringhof complex. Sabine E. (53) was arrested in Frankfurt. Federal police are charging them with "membership in the Revolutionary Cells/Rote Zora". Although the statute

of limitations has expired for more specific charges, this did not prevent the authorities from seeking to strike a blow against the RZ. After a court approved of their continued detention, the three were dispersed to prisons in Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, and Wuppertal. In addition to the charge of membership in a terrorist organization, Harald G. and Sabine E. are also charged with participation in the bomb attack on the 'Zentrale Sozialhilfestelle fur Asylbewerber' government office in Berlin. Axel H., who worked as the building manager for the Mehringhof, is charged with having maintained an explosives depot.

Serious Treason

The arrests and raids were the result of treason. The search warrant used for the raid on the Mehringhof makes it clear that statements given to the police were the impetus for the cops' actions. In November 1999, federal police arrested Tarek Mohamad Ali Mousli (40) on charges of being a member of the RZ in Berlin from 1986-1996 and of having participated in several attacks. Already at this time there were eight homes searched, and police looked for the explosive 'Gelamon 40' as well as blast caps, which the RZ had stolen from a quarry in the 1980s, in the Mehringhof. These searches were also because of Tarek Mousli.

Tarek Mousli is alleged to have participated in the October 28, 1986 attack on Harald Hollenberg, a leading asylum policy bureaucrat, and the September 1, 1987 attack on Gunter Korbacher, a federal judge. Korbacher and Hollenberg were wounded with shots to the legs. But the statute of limitations on both of these actions has expired. Then there was the February 6, 1987 bomb attack against the 'Zentrale Sozialhilfestelle fur Asylbewerber' office in Berlin.

Tarek Mousli had already been arrested back on May 19, 1999, on charges of "supporting the RZ", but he was released from custody on July 7. His re-arrest in November seemingly had the desired effect: The police got their hands on someone who would testify on behalf of the state against the Revolutionary Cells. Tarek M. is not an unknown activist among the left in Berlin. He's been known as an activist for years. For this reason, it can be assumed that his extensive statements to police would also touch upon people connected with the Revolutionary Cells.

The Statute Of Limitations On State Repression Never Expires

Although the statute of limitations on some charges may expire, the federal police operate by the motto that the state's armed attacks are never out of date. Federal prosecutors now think they have an opportunity to investigate the Revolutionary Cells. As with the Red Army Fraction (RAF), some investigations of the RZ date back over 20 years. Behind this fact is not

only the long-term thinking of bureaucrats, but also the notion that the state must win a victory over each and every expression of fundamental opposition. It doesn't matter if the activists from back then are still active now or not; that's just a lever the state can use to pressure people, offering a return to normal life by turning in former comrades.

The federal prosecutors are definitely wringing their hands with glee: Treason creates a situation in which there is speculation of a chain reaction. It's obvious the cops never expected to find any explosives when they stormed into the Mehringhof, but it did create a broad echo for their story that the party's over for the so-called "freetime terrorists". According to one government spokesman, quoted in the magazine 'Focus', the recent arrests could shed new light on the Karry case. Karry was the Economic Minister in the German state of Hesse was shot (and accidentally killed) in his sleep in 1981. The RZ said after his death that they had only intended to wound him in the legs.

Germany's Turncoat Law: 'Die Kronzeugenregelung'

One of the few election promises which the Greens pledged to keep was the abolition of the 'Kronzeugenregelung', a law created in the 1980s to get people to turn state's evidence and make statements against the RAF. Despite cries of protest from the police, the federal government announced it would let the law expire at the end of the millennium. At the very last moment, literally, federal prosecutors were handed two prime candidates to make one last use of the 'Kronzeugenregelung'. In addition to Tarek M. there's also Hans-Joachim Klein, who was arrested a year ago in France and handed over to Germany a few months ago.

The Return Of Klein

It came as no surprise that Klein was willing to cooperate with the repression authorities in Germany. As early as 1977, with the help of 'Spiegel' magazine and the Frankfurt 'sponti' anarchist scene (some of whom later became government ministers), Klein announced his "retirement from terrorism" and he threatened to name names. Federal prosecutors are now charging him with three counts of murder related to the 1975 occupation of the OPEC Conference in Vienna. The only question was whether or not he would drag down his old sponti friends with him, the people who published his words and gave him financial support for many years. Many people were pleased when Klein announced that his deal with the federal prosecutors would only include statements dealing with events up to 1977 - because these days it's no longer profitable to have once been active against the RAF. From



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situation with arms. (...) Despite the fact that we may have different opinions about the aims and the means of the struggle, we should discuss such things and learn how to argue about them. As a part of that, we must see the interconnectedness between base work in political projects and structures, public protests and resistance, and militant praxis.

We send feminist greetings, strength, and solidarity to Andrea!

Freedom For Andrea!
Freedom For All Political Prisoners
Who Struggle Against Oppression
And Exploitation!

Freedom For All Social Prisoners!
Freedom For All Women Who Killed
Rapists, Abusers, And Sex Traders!
Let Us Not Be Divided,
Let Us Be In Solidarity!
Let Us Struggle For Our Freedom!

Feminist Lesbians Against Racism, Sexism,
And Imperialism
Vienna - October 1999

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the point of view of the Federal Prosecutor's Office (BAW), a murderer is always a murderer - except for the ones in your own ranks.

This indirect deal did have its victims, of course. On October 15, 1999, Rudolph Schindler (56) was arrested in Frankfurt. Klein accused him of being involved in scouting out the OPEC building in Vienna. Rudolph Schindler is now in pre-trial detention in Weiterstadt Prison. The BAW have announced there will be further arrests stemming from Klein's statements. The trial against Hans-Joachim Klein will begin in the spring of the year 2000 in Frankfurt. It looks like it will be a long trial, with the justice authorities trying to close the book on one chapter of the armed struggle of the 1970s. Witnesses who will be called to testify include Ramirez Sanchez, or "Carlos", who is imprisoned in Paris, as well as Johannes Weinrich, who's serving a life term in Berlin. Both were former comrades of Klein. Despite what one thinks of the politics and actions of the "Group of International Revolutionaries", better known as the "Carlos Group", they at least, in contrast to Klein, never sold themselves out by making state-

ments to authorities while in prison.

Solidarity

In Berlin, a solidarity committee has been set up to support the three people who have been arrested. An initial press conference was held, and the 250 people took part in the initial solidarity demo. The alternative projects involved in the Mehringhof protested against the police raid and announced their solidarity with the prisoners. The Berlin refugee solidarity organization 'Forschungstelle für Flucht und Migration' is demanding freedom for Harald, who was one of the group's founders. Letters of international solidarity have been received from Chile as well.

The solidarity committee can be reached at the following address: Solidaritätsbüro Mehringhof Gneisenaustr. 2 10965 Berlin, Germany

Recent updates can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.gib.squat.net/mh-razzia>

(Source: 'So Oder So' #5 - January 2000; Translated by Arm The Spirit)



The Mehringhof complex after the raid

Repression Against Anti-NATO Activists In Italy

Totalitarian Democracy!

Arrests and house searches against participants and initiators of the anti-imperialist summer camp and enemies of NATO in Italy

The ongoing persecution of enemies of the terrorist and genocidal war of aggression against Yugoslavia, waged by NATO and decisively supported by Italy's ruling centre-left government, has reached a new height. On the 7th of December three activists of the "Internationalist Coordination Quemada", initiators and participants of the anti-imperialist summer camp, as well as part of the anti-NATO movement in northern Italy (which is mainly directed against the military base of Aviano), were arrested on charges of being part of the so-called "terrorist organisation Partisan Sabotage Groups (GPS)", held responsible for a number of arson-attacks against companies that worked in the NATO-base of Aviano. Under the pretext of ties with the GPS, a house search and a lengthy interrogation was also conducted against a leading comrade of the International Leninist Current and its Italian section Voce Operaia.

We reproduce parts of the political declaration of Voce Operaia:

"Our organisation will not be intimidated by the anti-terrorist witchhunt. We will continue to fight systematically against the policy of aggression of NATO and the Italian government. (...) To conduct its imperialist machinations, NATO does not only need highly armed armies with an inhuman potential of destruction, it is of equal importance to eliminate every inner opposition. (...)"

This opposition during the attack against Yugoslavia has taken diverse forms in Italy. In

particular the mobilisations of the people on the street were under attack by the D'Alema government. The anti-imperialist struggle was also conducted with other methods, for example arson attacks and attacks against symbols of Italy's participation in the war. These attacks have not, unlike the bombs of NATO, caused any casualties, damage was only done to cars and house walls. It's extreme hypocrisy that the war criminals condemn these actions as 'terrorist and illegal'. (...)

No revolutionary with self-esteem can be against violence and sabotage on a principled basis. Each and every action against the capitalist system is a form of sabotage, also an industrial strike that is paralysing production. The oppressed are forced to defend themselves against the attacks of the state bandits, which claim for themselves a monopoly of violence. He who wants to change the world, knows that this can only be done violently, with an all encompassing revolution.

What is correct in principle, may be ill-timed, counter-productive, even plainly wrong, politically. Violent action is a political form of struggle and therefore it has to be judged politically not morally. (...) What seems to be morally correct may be politically wrong. A deed of revenge can appear correct to revolutionary consciousness. But who is heading from theory to praxis, has to start with an analysis of what is important and useful for a concrete political struggle. Today's passivity of the working-class movement has deeply rooted political and social reasons, it is not a result of a brutal policy of oppression by the capitalist state. In this concrete framework, sabotage actions, with the aim of overcoming this passivity, are in general useless and therefore wrong. (...)"

This does not influence our duty of militant

solidarity. We need to defend all comrades that have fallen victim of state repression. Whatever may be the facts of the political accusations against the comrades, it is our moral and political duty to demand their immediate release.

**Immediate Release Of All Arrested Comrades!
Immediate Withdrawal Of All Accusation Of "Participation In A Terrorist Organisation"!
Freedom For All Revolutionary Prisoners!**

(end of statement)"

As of now a number of anti-imperialist and internationalist organisations have announced their protest against the repressive actions taken by the Italian government against the anti-NATO movement. We call on everyone to voice their protest, to demand the immediate release of the imprisoned comrades and the end of the witchhunt against the forces in opposition to NATO.

Solidarity messages to the arrested and persecuted comrades to:

marxista@tin.it and quemada@tin.it

**Executive Committee of the International Leninist Current
Vienna-Rome
December 10, 1999**

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Political Prisoners And The Question Of Violence

"There is no revolution without violence. Those who don't accept violence can cross out the word revolution from their dictionary." - Malcolm X

Working to free political prisoners is not a neutral act. It never has been. It must primarily be a means of reappropriating the concept of revolutionary violence. To do so today is to challenge the sense of taboo and mandatory silence that befall the movement after the defeats and reversals suffered by the guerrilla and other hostile forces on this continent. The bourgeoisie has repressed the very idea of violence.

From Paris to Naples, from the workplace to the ghetto streets, a recomposition of the revolutionary forces has begun. It cannot be denied. Within this overall revival, the movement should now find the strength to stop repeating simplistic anti-terrorist denunciations and churning out watered down revolutionary clichés. Because both of these betrayals maintain the proletariat in the same state of impotent submission.

The years of reformist pacifism and sectarian catechisms, all about what the counter-violence of the exploited and oppressed should and especially should not consist of, have clouded any emancipatory vision. Sure, some still talk of picking up the gun but always without acting concretely to prepare the organisation of the revolutionary war. As far as they are concerned, the time is never right for revolutionary action.

The big anti-terrorist campaigns of the eighties took advantage of these twin betrayals of the fake revolutionaries. And now campaigns for the freedom of political prisoners are being organised based on the same collaboration: first off they claim that no good came of the armed struggle of the sixties to the eighties. That this struggle represented nothing more than a "death-wish" after the barricades of '68 were defeated. That it all originated in the badly healed history of the forties. Turning a new page is what is most important for all of these "supporters". The obvious conclusion, then nothing else will happen and their past and present betrayals will all be justified.

For others, the failures of the eighties all boil down to the simple defeat of the guerrilla, and are mystified by the mantras of the official protester. All of their favourite empty formulas are called out: the absence of a Party, of a class union, of an organised autonomous movement...

Within these rearguard campaigns the liberation of political prisoners becomes the ultimate way of rewriting the revolutionary history of our continent since the sixties. It amounts to the partial sectarian critique carried out by the

new talking shops.

We, who have for years been held hostage behind these prison bars, refuse to have any part in this or to be turned into the objects of these underhanded operations.

One does not work to free political prisoners out of a sense of charity or humanism. Denouncing the conditions in which political prisoners are held should mainly be a matter of agitation and propaganda. It should automatically overstep the boundaries imposed upon it and confront the fundamental questions of revolutionary process in our era. It is thus a political act and a class position. A way to fight to reappropriate our memory and knowledge, to empower us and destroy bourgeois power. By fighting for liberation we reappropriate our hidden history and experience of struggle. But more than anything else, we reappropriate the very concept of legitimate "counter-violence".

For years this concept has been attacked, distorted and dragged through the mud.

The class struggle, however, is constantly creating and reproducing this counter-violence. It is inherent in the violence of the capitalist system itself. The first violence is that of exploitation, routine, the discipline of the factory barracks, misery and forced labour. The violence of profits. Within this mode of production the exploited naturally engage in this counter-violence: it is the unavoidable result of the violence of capital's relations of production. It is its condemnation.

During the movement against the closing of the Renault factory in Vilvorde a worker reminded us of this, remarking that "the violent ones are those who shut the factory and throw the workers into the street."

The violence is the whole system. The least of its social relations is violent. Violence is the logic of imperialist subordination and impoverishment that condemns humanity in the periphery to misery. Violence is the fascistization of the monopolies' power. It is the apartheid of institutional racism, the rise of reactionary policies. It is sexist violence...

Daily life leaves the mark of violence on the body of every man and woman who is exploited, oppressed, pushed around, forced to struggle just to survive.

To resist and rebel against this violence is a "life instinct".

The exploiters monopolise violence, which is concentrated in the mechanisms and relations of the State. The confrontation between State and Class is thus at the heart of all conflicts, but in a different way than in the past. What with globalisation the State is no longer simply the government apparatus of the nation-state or the State system. The relations and mechanisms of State express themselves differently within the global conjuncture of their



contradictions and political crisis. The State is the reflection of multinational monopoly interests and also reflects their contradictions in a competitive war without mercy.

The cops and anti-terrorist laws are the armour that protects these local, national and continental multi-State powers. They militarise them. The more violent power becomes, the more violence becomes power. The more they are taken over by the real economic power of a handful of monopolies and managerial elites, the more they insist on the spectacular manipulation of "democracy", with its obsessive, ever-present and one-dimensional self-legitimising propaganda. This show has become the dictatorial means by which the violence of everyday life is managed.

Those in power have always accepted "protest" as a perfectly tolerable ghetto - more than that, today it is a subculture parasitically tied to the survival of the bourgeois regime. It has guaranteed itself this status by going along with the manipulation and denunciation of revolutionaries, out of fear perhaps that even silence could be construed as tacit support for "terrorism".

The protester's pacifism is bound by whatever the powerful will make of it.

The social movements only threaten the established order when their actions contain the possibility of stepping outside of the regular framework of struggle. They are only a threat inasmuch as they appear to be able to turn to revolutionary action raising the question of revolutionary violence. But it is clear today that the card-carrying activists have internalised the mantras of official anti-terrorism to the point of caricature. They stitch the slogans of order and morality in the prairies of submission.

At the top of their lungs they repeat that it is the aggressor who is weak one and the victim who is strong, that those who rebel are fanatics and those who exploit are legitimate spokespeople, partners in "democratic" reconciliation and republican antifascist fronts!

The official commemoration of May [68]

was a true victory for these pseudo-revolutionaries. Their road to Damocles had been blessed. By condemning violence, the sanctimonious ones justified the fact that they had returned to the fold of the bourgeois elite.

Sixty-eight was recuperated because it could be. Everything about it that was characteristic of protest in the metropole and that it never managed to completely escape allowed its history to be taken over. The insurrectionary autonomous movement that followed in '77 had to be dealt with differently. From the insurrectionary demonstrations in Milan and Rome to the acts of anti-NATO resistance, to the "asambleista" movement in Spain, and from the grassroots rebellions of the working class to the guerrilla attacks, '77 was autonomous and armed and ripped a hole in the consensus of the imperialist centers. Faced with this situation the repression could not afford any half-measures. These events had to be wiped from the collective memory and those who participated were to either repent or rot in special prisons.

The movement of '77 had pushed the autonomous alternative too far, and so all of the system's various forces united in attacking it, making it pay with every ounce of its being.

Yet revolutionary violence remains on the agenda, all the more so because the monopolies have taken over and fenced off all political space. Revolutionary violence definitely cannot and will never take the archaic form many imagine for it. For them it is nothing more than a memory, a fantasy or a diversion...

They should explain to us how we are to subvert and destroy the monopolies and their militarism, how we should sabotage the fascistization of globalisation.

In all seriousness, who still believes that we can win by reading from our prayerbooks of pious wishes, by fighting for little reforms, by signing petitions and going for long walks?

For having merely asked such obvious questions we can already hear the regular insults: adventurists, substitutionists, immediatists, anarchists...

Back in 1971 Lotta Continua already knew exactly what to make of such attacks: "Those who get scandalized and yell about terrorism and romanticism are usually just trying to hide their own cowardice before their revolutionary duties."

And this is exactly what is going on today.

The violence that political prisoners symbolise is not just ancient history. It is more than just the human legacy of the past two decades of struggle with its successes and failures. Anyone who still cares about the emancipation of the proletariat and who takes the time to understand it within its historic context knows that it is much more than that.

It shows that armed violence is necessary if one wants to subvert the management of our neoliberal societies today. That it is and will continue to be necessary to use it in order to break out of the straightjacket of the fake protester. This straightjacket is necessary to maintain submission, with some differences but still essentially the same; submission to dictatorship's future. Only armed violence can tear

away the banner of citizenship's "good wishes", of new "New Deals", of a return to the welfare state, of anti-fascist unity with the "progressive" bourgeoisie...

A minor sidenote. Lots of people demonstrate every week against Le Pen, against Fini... alongside the very people who maintain the wall of silence that surrounds political imprisonment in our European countries. As far as the prisoners from the guerrilla are concerned, the social-democratic management of the prison system has nothing to learn from authoritarian regimes. They use the same methods, such as criminalization, white torture [solitary confinement], arbitrary treatment and beatings, and hide them all behind a facade of foolproof arrogance.

In France our comrades Groix, Ramazan Alpaslan and Pello Marinarenari have died in their cells. Many other comrades suffer from incurable diseases that were caused by the conditions of their imprisonment.

Two hundred political prisoners are rotting in the French prisons, and yet those in charge of this "slow death" still want to lead the anti-fascist struggle!

Those who do not want to talk about imperialism and State repression should also remain quiet when it comes to fascism.

To raise the question of political prisoners and revolutionary violence is to relentlessly work to revolutionise the "revolutionaries" in the metropole.

First of all because this question reveals the degree to which an alliance has been built with the "left-wing" managers during two decades of campaigns for charity or establishment anti-fascism. When these do-gooders were in the government they enthusiastically defended the triumph of neoliberalism and were responsible for a leap forward to unprecedented inequality. They wrote the laws of this new apartheid and proportional representation for the Front National.

Furthermore, used properly the question of violence and political prisoners should also be a tool to fight against the gradualist tradition that was inherited from the opportunistic old "Communist" Parties. All those concepts of peaceful coexistence that are repeated out of a sense of habit: "the mass line" and the rejection of the minority aspect of violence, everything that has been used to indefinitely postpone any revolutionary action.

Decades of "responsible" actions, appeasement, electoralism, routine, reducing revolutionary activity and ideas to a set of cliché-ridden platitudes... this has made the movement lose sight of one of the key points of Marxist theory: that the transition from capitalism to socialism will be full of revolutionary violence. It cannot happen any other way.

To raise the issue of revolutionary violence is thus to regain a sense of the revolutionary goal. It means reconnecting our present-day struggles and resistance to the possible destruction of the system itself, tying a sense of daily combat to our historic class interests.

It means acting in the spirit of past struggles and rediscovering the red thread that runs from June 1848 to the Paris Commune, from the Revolution of 1905 to the European Revolution

of 1917-1923, to the Spanish Revolution in 1936, to Barcelona's Mayo '37, to China's Long March and Cultural Revolution, to all the anti-colonial struggles, to Che Guevara and the Cuban, Congolese and Bolivian guerrilla; and from Europe's May piu senza fucile of 1968 to the autonomous offensives and movements of 1977-78.

It means putting theory back on its feet. The lessons and experiences of past struggles and the entire revolutionary process are part and parcel of the practical problems, the resolution of tasks, the direct action of revolutionaries today. Gravediggers and talking shops will never own the theory of struggle. Whenever struggle breaks out anew it is imperative to break through all the litanies and spectacular traffic and reappropriate the practical theory.

Today as in the past, communism is the language of preparation and application of revolutionary violence. It is the will to incarnate times of [working] class power. With no theory, memory or violent practice, proletarian activists will never be able to afford a consistent strategy to build class power.

This is all the more true now that the key subject is a highly marginalised proletariat. In fact, the revolutionary subject capable of transforming society is no longer a professional worker, or even the mass-worker of the post-war era, but rather the impoverished worker who is suffering the intense violence of worldwide exploitation. The same subject from Jakarta to La Courneuve, from Los Angeles to Lagos, but at the same time a subject that reflects strong social diversity. The homogenisation and polarisation of his/her condition has rearranged the context of the class struggle. It is obvious that the proletariat can no longer recompose itself with the same means of struggle and organisation as in the past. These historic methods have actually become obstacles that aggravate his/her economic and social marginalisation, with all the associated political and cultural consequences. The super-exploited proletariat will not recompose itself as a revolutionary class through strikes or trade union politics, nor even by joining this or that political party whose talk is more radical than its neighbours. These are no longer options. Instead, he/she will learn through direct action and in the flames of revolt. The misery in which s/he lives and the repression s/he faces from those who represent capitalism in crisis constantly force him/her into violent confrontations.

To prepare for armed confrontation is to work for the recomposition of the class, for the unity and politicisation of this global super-exploited proletariat. It is to show that it represents the only worldwide class capable of carrying the revolutionary process to its final conclusion. A class which is made to fill this role, its historic and collective nature being to destroy its present individualised position as an economic and political slave of capital.

This is a long-term process of consciousness raising and organisation, a class war in which sporadic battles will spread into an insurrectionary confrontation.

To face up to the question of violence implies organising it along revolutionary lines. It is an initial collective and practical attempt to



rearm the proletariat with the desire to arm itself and wage revolutionary war against capital. It is the concrete application of the questions at the heart of the struggle for political autonomy.

In time the [working] class will once again take up both its flag and its gun, in one burst, as they are inseparable. It will carry forth its own interests and the war to make them triumph. Through their interaction class interests will guide the gun and the gun will clear the way to reveal its uncompromising global interests.

In conclusion.

What does it mean to raise the question of armed violence on this International Day of the Revolutionary Prisoner?

From the back of our prison cells we can already hear the sighs of the ill-intentioned. No comrades, the question of armed violence is not the only revolutionary issue we care about, nor is it the only pressing issue that needs to be addressed. Some people have always distorted the guerrilla's position by claiming that this is all we think about. This is a ready-made argument that all too often serves as an excuse for not carrying out any real discussion about the necessity of violence and its organised practice. It has always been the trump card used by those who wish to silence the debate.

We prisoners from the guerrilla are simply trying to examine some basic elements of this question. Its actual nature and the contradictions with which it confronts activists in the imperialist countries.

Amongst the latter there are many who support a guerrilla somewhere in the world. Few, however, take the next step and go from support in this particular situation onto the global nature of the issue, and so on to the concrete implications concerning where we live. Because supporting the idea of a revolutionary guerrilla automatically raises practical political questions. To do all you can so that the guerrilla wins in Mexico, Turkey or Asia demands serious thought about what action revolutionaries should take in the "belly of the beast", in the fortress where the monopolies keep their loot. Where the owners and technocrats who carve up the whole planet live in prosperity. Where the exploiters and oppressors of over 90% of the global proletariat live.

In 1972 Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof and the other comrades from the RAF offered an initial answer to this question by destroying the American military computers that were being used to plan the bombing of Vietnam. This action overstepped the boundaries of mere support, becoming instead a concrete act that united the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles here with the struggle for freedom on the periphery.

For three decades the globalisation of production and exchange has undergone an unprecedented qualitative advance. Not a day passes that even the least of things does not remind us of this fact. But this globalisation is first and foremost the globalisation of class struggle, the globalisation of problems and the globalisation of solutions.

At this point, who can seriously claim to understand why people take up arms in the

Sierra and simultaneously condemn those who do the same in the fortresses of the imperialist order? Who can claim that the specific factors dominate the general conflict to this point? That this is a fair and revolutionary position?

The search for unity is the revolutionary projection of the global proletariat.

Wherever they find themselves revolutionaries should reinforce and direct this "long march". They should work towards the politicization and recomposition of the class in the framework of this era's dominant space, in all its dimensions from the local to the global. Everywhere they should destroy obstacles and limits that always reduce struggles to the rules and boundaries of the system's national and institutional organization. The two are now directly connected. And in the imperialist metropole, the national and the institutional are all the more reactionary, as they become mechanisms in the process of fascification of the monopolies.

The vast armies of poor workers, the big monopolies' new slaves and the disinherited slum dwellers, constitute the majority of humanity. This super-exploited proletariat is the axis around which the questions of wealth redistribution and the appropriation of the means of production must be resolved. It's the only way. No other class or subclass can be substituted for it in the revolutionary process. Least of all the representatives of local and national metropolitan classes who always end up defending "progress", the reforms of imperialist citizenship and the sacred charities.

How can anyone believe that there is even a grain of hope to be found in the netherworld of the "left of the left" and the other forms of metropolitan protest? In the end all they will ever do is work to protect and manage the minor local advantages. They can not escape this bureaucratic destiny.

Furthermore, they know very well that these little reforms are only granted on condition that they divide the [working] class and mobilise it around issues tied to its own backyard which is protected by borderguards and vigilante plans (translators note: "vigilante" is an anti-terrorist plan that especially targets immigrants). Behind their facade they are collaborating with apartheid.

For more than fifty years, the triumph of "social democratic" thought in the European metropoles has revealed itself to be a sham at both the level of institutions and protest groups. The half-measures of populist programmes have not saved the proletariat from monopoly capitalism's legal claws. On the contrary, they have made the claws more dynamic. The chasm between stolen wealth and poverty has never been so violent. Not only increased productivity and the infernal rhythm of production, but also precarity and the insecurity of millions of proletarians have all aggravated the already intense level of exploitation.

As far as the proletariat is concerned institutional politics offers a choice between the lesser of two evils, or simply quitting the game.

Around the world the proletarian class is alone faced with the alternative of socialism or barbarism that is comes from the development

and decomposition of capitalism.

From the streets of Gaza to the barricades of Bogota, from Chiapas to the ghettos and slums of our own European megacities, wherever it rebels it must take up arms... everywhere the masses are overstepping the rotten boundaries of the old structures. The political parties and institutionalised trade unions are today reduced to impotence and inadequacy when faced with the new spaces and their globalisation. Everywhere the proletariat is socialising new resistance, in self-education and self-organisation, in the quest for its political autonomy. Of course this doesn't come about without many mistakes. False beliefs and real fundamentalism are spreading like a new plague. Yet the winds of freedom are blowing, and they are stronger.

Wherever proletarians rebel they recover the sense of revolutionary violence. Where there are no guns they use stones. And yet some people insist that the guerrilla's time has past, that armed struggle is ancient history!

We are told that all of this changes nothing for revolutionaries here. That we must faithfully continue to go through the ridiculous motions of revisionist gradualism. That we must perfect our bottled jargon on imaginary insurrections to come and remain patient while getting ready for them. The only way to really get ready for the revolution is by engaging in revolutionary action. Legalism, pacifism and daily compromises have never come close to bringing about revolution. Only firm revolutionary action, the resolution of tasks as they actually arise and the subversion of barracks rules will awaken the revolutionary spirit.

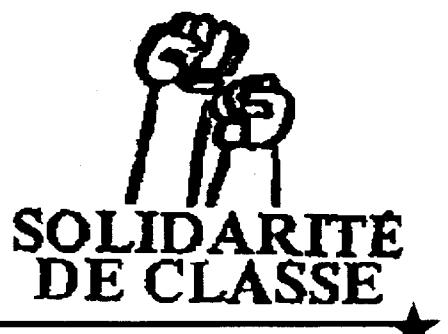
The preconditions of the coming revolutionary surge show the centrality of the perfect ties binding together the struggles for class autonomy, armed liberation and proletarian internationalism. It's only a beginning...

**It Is Right To Rebel!
Dare To Struggle, Dare To Win!**

June 19, 1998

Joelle Aubron
Nathalie Menigon
Jean-Marc Rouillan

Note: A second theoretical political contribution by the AD prisoners, entitled "De la fausse alternative entre néoliberalisme et néo-reformisme et de l'importance d'en sortir", was released during the Day of the Gant. The APAPC and ABC will send a copy of this document to interested comrades.



Collective Biography Of The Action Directe Prisoners

We, members of Action Directe, have been incarcerated since February 1987. When the four of us were arrested it became a symbol for the government of its fight against the guerrilla on this territory. It brought its propaganda and counter-revolutionary methods to bear on us, isolating us by reorganizing, for example, a section of the Fleury-Merogis Maison d'arrêt des femmes [women's prison - ed.]. The first trials were meant to show off the omnipotence of bourgeois justice. Certain cases, for which other comrades had already been incarcerated for years, were at last closed in the delirium that surrounded our "participation" in this show.

On December 1, 1987, we began our first hungerstrike to be reunited together and for an end to solitary confinement. Before it ended on April 15, 1988, two of us had appeared in five trials after more than two months on strike. Ill at ease, semi-conscious, put on a drip behind the scenes, it didn't matter, the Special Sections' show had to go on.

Everyday, the powers that be deploy their forces against many hostile realities. Although there were activists from the organization or from other realities behind bars, it was our arrests, trials, and detention that the State made into the perfect expressions of its monopoly of violence, of its will to triumph and to triumph quickly at that.

A perfect example if there ever was one of this show of force was the trial of January 1989. Dealing with the "Pierre Overney" Commando's action against Georges Besse, the final act in this drama just had to be in step with the hateful barrage of propaganda that had followed our action. Named President Director General of Renault by the social-democratic government, Besse specialized in brutal restructuring, laying off tens of thousands of workers at a time (34,000 at PUK-Pechiney, 25,000 at Renault). Despite the slander by the bourgeoisie's media lackeys and trade union collaborators, the action met with sympathy amongst the workers (2). So the trial had two objectives: to maintain the line put forward from the beginning that the attack was not a political act, and to take yet another opportunity to hammer in the wonders of neoliberalism. We were treated to the spectacle of both a minister and an ex-minister paying homage to the perfect technocrat G. Besse; Edith Cresson, who had assigned Besse to Renault while Minister of Industrial Restructuring and Foreign Trade and then became Minister of European Affairs in the new socialist government in 1988, and Andre Giraud who was Minister of Defense in the previous right-wing government. Whatever contradiction there was in two such high-ranking political figures testifying at the trial of "four criminal fanatics" was simply buried under the violent consensus of the media and political

establishment. They enthusiastically hailed our first sentence of life plus 18 years (3) as if it were their own personal victory, the crowning glory of their strategy to annihilate the revolutionary left-wing struggle.

We called off our first strike without having most of our demands met. Any slight remedy to our isolation would prove to be only temporary. Two months after this trial the four of us were once again subjected to the torture of solitary confinement. In April 1989 we again went into battle with the same demands, namely an end to solitary confinement and the reunification of political prisoners. In July 1989 our detention in solitary confinement was officially ended and we were partially reunited; we were furthermore promised that accommodations would be made so we could speak with one another (a promise that was never kept).

In fact, that fall we found ourselves in partial solitary in a section specially built for us. The right we had won to be grouped by sex, two women and two men, was not withdrawn, and yet neither was the State's strategy of destroying revolutionary hostility on this territory, as expressed through its actions against us.

In January 1991 we began a new battle. Once again our demands were to be reunited together and for an end to solitary confinement. At the same time we were trying to build a Resistance Front to class justice and prison. So for two years, up until April 1993, we took turns going on hungerstrike for a week at a time each.

In May 1995 we received our second life sentences. Before the trial had even started it was clear that all over the world a cycle of struggle had petered out. Whatever its errors, on this territory Action Directe was without a doubt the most advanced expression of this cycle. This explains the extreme symbolization that surrounds us.

Time will judge our contribution to the proletariat's long march towards political autonomy, the proletariat being the only class that is fundamentally revolutionary to the end. Like many others throughout history and in our own generation, we have made choices that demanded a total commitment of our lives. We have no regrets. Our individual paths are intertwined with an important era for the proletarian movement on this continent at a time of growing inter-relatedness between the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles.

Jean-Marc Rouillan was sixteen years old in 1968. From a left-wing family, he was nevertheless not very political. He has suggested that this might be what enabled him to engage in the revolt against totalitarianism with no hesi-

tation. He was active with the CAL (Comité d'action Lyceen - Student Action Committee) in events in the neighborhoods north of Toulouse. He then joined the anarcho-communist movement, notably the Autonomous Libertarian Groups (translator's note: Groupes Autonomes Libertaires - it is important to note that in Europe the word "libertarian" is not associated solely with anarcho-capitalism as in the United States, but also with left-wing anarchism and anti-authoritarianism). These months were a time of intense learning where direct action was a common occurrence in the many struggles within the revitalized revolutionary movement. Occupation committees in the factories, rent strikes in the cities, struggle against the police state...

Given that the city was rightly considered the capital of anti-francoist Spain, he then became involved in support work for the revolutionary struggle against Franco's dictatorship. In 1970 he was a member of the first nucleus of the Movimiento Iberico de Liberacion (MIL), the armed organization of the Barcelona (Catalunya) underground workers movement.

The MIL acquired funds for the solidarity chests and lent its political and technical support to the self-organized groups and the different fighting assemblies that were growing on the ground. It functioned as a network of anti-fascist resistance (the GACs, Groupes Autonomes de Combat - Autonomous Fighting Groups) but it also developed an anti-capitalist praxis tailored to this period: political autonomy for the working class, radical critique and anti-revisionism, against all collaboration with the "democratic" forces that only wanted to shepherd Francoism into a new authoritarian bourgeois regime. The MIL-GAC was destroyed by fierce repression. One of its members, Salvador Puig Antich, was the last political prisoner to be sentenced to death by garrotting (March 2, 1974). Back in France, Jean-Marc worked to bring together many libertarian and autonomist groups willing to carry out international armed struggle against the dictatorship. Out of this came the GARI (Groupes d'Action Révolutionnaire Internationalistes - Internationalist Revolutionary Armed Groups) which were active at this time in many European countries. Jean-Marc was arrested in 1974, but when Franco died he was amnestied and released in spring 1977.

He then started working to bring together the post-May '68 autonomist movement with the new expressions of autonomous working class struggle that came out of '68 and the battles of the late seventies, and which found most of their inspiration in the various Italian theses. He worked to set up underground groups like the Coordinations Autonomes (Autonomous Coordinations) and to generalize



actions and resistance. The fruit of this labor was Action Directe (Direct Action), born in early 1978.

Nathalie Menigon was born in 1957 in a working class family. In 1975 she began working at a bank, joined the CFDT trade union after a strike. She was then kicked out of the union and joined the autonomous communist group "Camarades" (Comrades). Like the Italian group Autonomia Operaia (Workers Autonomy), "Camarades" called for anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist social revolt and lent its support to the Italian guerrilla movement. Nathalie took part in discussions and demonstrations in the Paris autonomist scene, and at the same time contemplated the necessity of armed combat.

In 1978 she and several comrades, including Jean-Marc, founded the revolutionary communist organization Action Directe. It was about concretely fighting the system and promoting the organization of the working class and its strategy: armed struggle. Both she and Jean-Marc participated in the first action claimed by the group: the machine gunning of the French chamber of commerce on May 1, 1979.

AD launched its first campaign of armed propaganda in the fall of 1979. It would last until 1980. From the very beginning AD attacked those places where the State's most important policies were thought out, decided upon and put into practice. AD chose its targets based on those questions that it described as being decisive at this stage (restructuring of the factories and neighbourhoods; military intervention in Tunisia, Chad and Zaire). More globally, AD was throwing down the red line that it intended to defend to the end: unity of the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles. As an example of this unity AD also attacked those involved in the exploitation of immigrant workers, responsible for the conditions they lived in and against which they were struggling.

Nathalie and Jean-Marc were arrested in September 1980 following a firefight with the police. After the election of Mitterand (1981) and the first social democratic government, a political battle erupted in the prisons. Solidarity movements were formed calling for an amnesty of political prisoners and for an end to the special courts. The massive mobilisation and the contradictions among the new powers led to

the release of all communist and anarchist prisoners and the abolition of State Security Court. Jean-Marc was freed in August 1981, Nathalie in September.

Action Directe took action again in November and December of that year. It participated in the occupation of sweatshops in Sentier and buildings in Barbes. Over a hundred mainly Turkish foreign families were thus rehoused. At the same time this campaign was accompanied by several actions and demonstrations against sweatshops and for housing. It was also a

matter of supporting Turkish comrades who had fled to France after the U.S.-supported coup d'état in their country in 1980. The reconstruction of underground structures continued on at the same time.

In June 1982 AD led an important mobilization against the G-7 Summit in Versailles. It was a decisive step towards the integration of the imperialist countries along the lines elaborated by the Reagan administration.

On the last day of the Summit, June 6, Israel attacked Lebanon. One of the lines of imperialist redeployment was thus illustrated in the most concrete way possible. There followed the invasion of Lebanon by Israeli troops, with all that followed for the Lebanese and Palestinian people. This led to AD reorienting itself towards new targets, claiming responsibility for the machinegunning of the car of the Israeli embassy's chief of security and a number of actions against Israeli companies. After a massacre-attack against a Jewish restaurant (Goldenberg) on Rosiers street in Paris, the powers that be orchestrated a counter-revolutionary propaganda campaign throughout the media. In an interview with the newspaper Libération, Jean-Marc defended the machinegunning of the chief of security and condemned the massacre attacks. At the same time as the Council of Ministers tried to isolate the organization's militants by ordering the dissolution of Action Directe, a series of raids were carried out against squats and known revolutionaries. Nathalie was still recovering from a serious car accident that had taken place when she was bringing posters against the G-7 Summit back from Brussels. Nevertheless, both she and Jean-Marc went underground.

Georges Cipriani was born in a working class family in 1950. In the late sixties he was a milling machine operator at the Renault "artillery", a machine-tool factory. He was working as a revolutionary activist in the base committees at "Devil's Island" (a part of the Renault site at Boulogne-Billancourt) when Pierre Overney, a communist activist, was assassinated by a security guard while passing out pamphlets in front of the factory (February 25, 1972). After the large mobilizations that followed this assassination, Georges left for Germany where he lived for ten years, participating in the anti-imperialist movement there. He took part in the organization's activities between 1982 and 1987.

Today, Georges is no longer a member of the Action Directe prisoners' collective. In the summer of 1993, after years of total and partial solitary confinement, Georges had to be committed to the Villejuif psychiatric hospital. After our two hungerstrikes of several months each, our hungerstrikes of one-in-four weeks from '91 to '93 certainly must have contributed to his weakened psyche.

Joelle Aubron. I was born in 1959. My family came from the traditional French bourgeoisie, but lived in a working class neighbourhood in Paris. I learned quickly that social equality was just a word engraved over my public school doorways.

The other even more important factor was the renewal of the revolutionary movement that took place in the sixties. Its anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism and anti-revisionism infused the atmosphere of that period.

By the late seventies very radical levels of confrontation had already been tried out and were still taking place, the Black Panther Party in the United States, the guerrilla movement in Latin America, the Palestinian struggle... Closer to home, in Italy and Germany other guerrillas were hitting the system at the heart of its cities. While there were many different struggles with specific demands, they all existed within a common dynamic against the system. So I lived in squats, in working class neighbourhoods in Paris that were facing real estate development. There was the anti-nuclear demonstration in Malville in the summer of 1977, where a demonstrator was killed by a cop's grenade. In October, at the same time in France was getting ready to extradite the lawyer Klaus Croissant to Germany, the RAF prisoners were executed at Stammheim. I was not a member in any group, but at these times I was going to demonstrations armed with molotov cocktails and took part in minor actions (against Ecuador's embassy after the bloody repression of sugar workers in Guyagil; the truck that was rigged to look like it was booby-trapped and left in front of the Minister of Justice following the sentencing of revolutionary activists...) Revolutionary violence was integrated into the everyday praxis of activists, guerrilla attacks showed us that we too would have to engage in armed struggle in our class warfare, it was a period full of discussion about the armed experiment, specifically the Italian situation.

To give a very short summary, one of the things we discussed was whether or not it was necessary to have a political-military organization. In 1980, even though the autonomist group that I was a part of participated in AD actions and lent our logistical support, its members were not members of Action Directe.

I was arrested with a comrade from AD in 1982 while leaving a place where there were arms. I did not declare myself to be a member of AD. I continued to think about things while in prison. It was a period marked by the cowardice of the French extreme left in general and the inanity of the French autonomist movement in particular. Imperialism advanced in all its splendor: the Israeli intervention in Lebanon, Thatcher in the Malvinas, the French bombing of Bekka in Lebanon, Reagan's attack on Grenada, the mining of Nicaragua's harbours... The supposedly left-wing French government's policies revealed the social-democrats' submission to the neoliberal line that was dominant around the world. At the same time the former revolutionary movement was going to pieces. On the one hand were those who would jump at any chance of acquiring power, on the other those whose who did nothing but recite the old formulas that left the proletariat just as defenseless against the attacks of the bourgeoisie. I now saw not only the usefulness of armed struggle, but also the necessity of the strategy of having a guerrilla organization. Despite this, when I was released from prison



in 1984, at first I only engaged in legal activities: support for the organization's prisoners, book distribution, newspaper. Even though I had decided to get back with AD I did not want to go underground as soon as I got out of prison. It was almost a year later, when the repression was intensifying, that I went underground.

We identify as revolutionary communists. Between 1982 and 1987, the organization developed its actions following two related strategies, the Unity of Revolutionaries in Western Europe and the Anti-Imperialist Front.

"For us, connecting the strategy of the Anti-Imperialist Front to the question of capitalist rule in Western Europe and the changes in its power relations meant establishing and actualizing the unity between revolutionary class's struggle and internationalism, as a living politic." (4) This corresponded with the reinvigorated proletarian internationalism that had come out of the revolutionary wave of the sixties. It was also based on changes in the system of capital accumulation, which had accelerated since the Versaille Summit. This new take on the anticapitalist struggle was necessary as European integration became an essential terrain of struggle, as important as the local or international terrains.

The West European bloc was both a source of logistical support for the imperialist rollback and a competing pole within the imperialist triad and its adoption of the new liberal-toyotist model of accumulation. On the other hand, the worldwide threat of war resulting from the militaristic policies of Reagan and his friends underlined the urgent need to build a proletarian front in all the parts of the movement from the guerrilla to the neighbourhood groups to the factory cells, with the goals of revolutionary sabotage and construction. At the heart of these factors that carry within them the spark of communism - that movement whose praxis abolishes the existing order of things - the Front embodied the united attack on imperialism's core policies, not just of the communist forces but of all the revolutionary and anti-imperialist realities. In January 1985 Action Directe and the RAF issued a joint text, signed by both organizations.

The dozen actions claimed by the organization during its first offensive as a unified West European guerrilla included attacks on NATO structures, arms factories, the nerve centers of economic and military power, and the assassination of René Audran, the Ministry of Defense's director of International Affairs, who was thus responsible for French arms sales abroad. In November 1986, at the end of the second offensive, the "Pierre Overney" Commando put an end to Georges Besse's career.

Today, after ten years of imprisonment, our incarceration is not so much marked by the project of destroying us as by the wish to bury us. Several factors should be noted when analysing this strategic reorientation on the part of the State. First of all, our struggles in prison. The partial success in breaking Georges should also be taken into account along with the continuing weakness of the French revolutionary movement as well as the need to resolve the contradiction between exceptional detention

and an official claim that there are no political prisoners.

One way in which the system tries to constantly maintain its legitimacy is by denying the existence of revolutionary prisoners. If things were as they should be no one would know how to resist its judicial or economic laws. "Necessary adaptation to globalization" or building a fortress Europe to protect against "the whole world's problems", as barbaric and unjust as they may be in the eyes of the growing number of people who are marginalized, impoverished, deported on charter flights, reduced to begging... these laws must be respected by those very people who they exploit, oppress and alienate. Erasing the revolutionary prisoners from the picture of contradictions wracking our societies is a central element in the process of preserving this submission to Capital's prestige.

Our arrests followed many other attacks by the forces of repression. They put an end to Action Directe's politico-military activity. In the late eighties an undeniable historic break was made. This observation is not at all apocalyptic when understood within our continent's revolutionary history. What is obviously much more serious are the widespread and unreasonable criticisms of the accumulated experience of twenty years of struggle, especially of the guerrilla struggle. Instead of a critique of our actual errors, there is only a litany of confusion. Instead of building bridges towards new perspectives it only leads to the liquidation of the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist left in Europe.

We believe that this revolutionary experiment can only be surpassed by a new revolutionary experiment taking into account and distilling the general interests of the entire class. We know on which heritage we ourselves based our search for new pathways. Nothing we see leads us to doubt the maxim "communism or barbarism", because never before have the "projects" of "capitalism with a human face" seemed more vain. Thus we have no reason to recant. Despite the conditions in which we find ourselves we continue our political work, dis-

cussing things with other revolutionary prisoners in writing, participating in a publication (Front), translating discussion texts or actions, especially those regarding the European revolutionary movement...

Joelle Aubron, July 1996

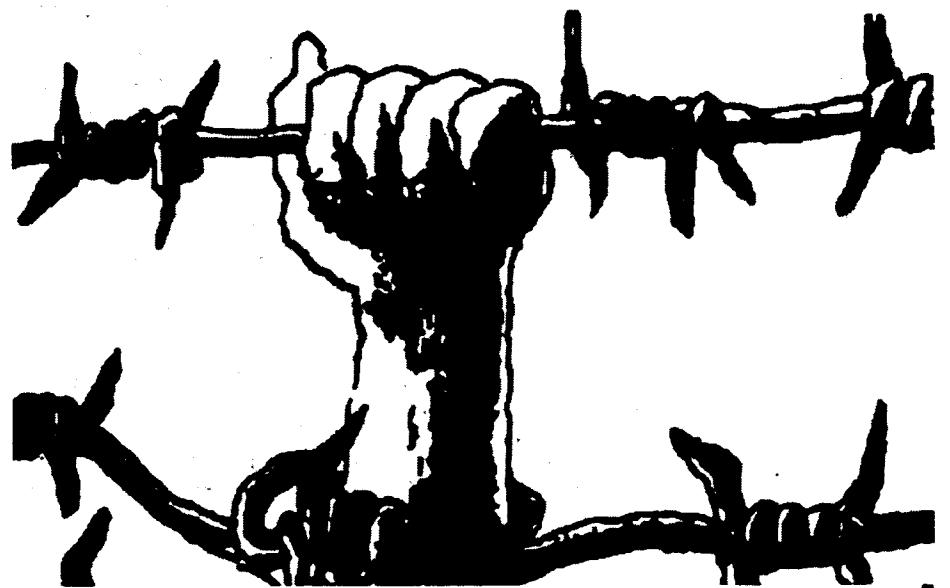
Notes:

1. The distinct characteristics of these Special Sections come into play in two ways: a) First, regardless of where the actions were committed the cases are heard by judges working in a special section of the Public Prosecutor's department in Paris, the 14th section. b) Secondly, the Assize court jury is made up of "professional jurors". This means that it is not a "people's jury" but rather magistrates chosen by those in power, who are supposed to judge according to their "innermost convictions". Set up in 1986, this special jurisdiction is meant to tie the sentences directly to the level of confrontation while simultaneously depoliticizing them as much as is possible.

2. Discussions between workers at the factory gates, which included threats and hopes of an action against Besse, were reported in the court records. In a similar vein, there were the union delegates who threatened their bosses that they would end up like Besse, or the poster that appeared that winter with a photo of the new President Director General with a bullseye on his forehead and the words "After Besse whose turn is it?", also handed out as a tract by the workers at Renault-Vivorde.

3. This means we are supposed to spend eighteen years in prison. It is only after these eighteen years that our sentence will become a "normal" life sentence with the hope for a possible release. So it is that we could be released after twenty five years of prison.

4. Trial statement - 1991.



Interview With The CCC Prisoners Collective

Introduction From The Anarchist Black Cross In Gent, Belgium

The CCC (Cellulues Communistes Combattantes - Fighting Communist Cells) prisoners have been long forgotten. In the decade since their conviction in 1988 they have been left without support, except from the "Parents and Friends of the Communist Prisoners" (APAPC) and some groups and individuals abroad. The anarchist movement never did much for the prisoners of the CCC, neither to better their situation nor to work for their release. There are a couple of reasons for this that are worth mentioning.

First, the hostility of the entire classical leftist spectrum, also from self-defined revolutionary groups. There is a widespread theory that says that the CCC - together with the "Gang of Nijve" - was part of a destabilization campaign by extreme right elements inside, or in cooperation with, state agencies. This thesis was systematically spread in papers and magazines and other publications, and a lot of anarchists believed this theory.

There are lots of elements pointing towards the fact that "a strategy of tension" raged in Belgium in the middle of the 1980s. We think the idea that the CCC was part of this "strategy" to be nonsense. There is no evidence whatsoever to support this. And there's also this: What about the fact that four militants were arrested, brought before the courts, and convicted? These people never renounced their beliefs and are still politically active. Those who spread these stories (and lets name them: these rumors were especially spread by the Maoists from the PTB - the Workers Party of Belgium) showed which side they are one (the side of the bourgeoisie) and to where sectarian logic leads. Attacked in their claims for power and truth, they threw overboard the most fundamental revolutionary principals: the defense of and solidarity with victims of state repression.

Secondly, there is the position of the CCC

concerning the FRAP arrests, who they see as "anarchist adventurers", possibly manipulated by Action Directe. Plus, at the trial they acted as "snitches". Though there is much more that can be written about this, we don't consider ourselves qualified to make statements. This because of the lack of background information on the internal affairs of the armed underground resistance groups, and because we don't have the documents of the trial itself. We hope in the end that all persons concerned give clear answers about this matter.

Finally, there is the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the CCC, which we think is the main cause for their isolation. Because this entails a rather fundamental (theoretical, political, and ideological) discussion, we have chosen to answer on this later, in a direct answer to the CCC, which we will publish. We state clearly: Supporting the CCC does not mean we defend their political ideas. We have few illusions about those ideas and the concrete consequences they have (for us).

Supporting the CCC prisoners points at one of the main purposes of the ABC: non-sectarian support and defense of revolutionary prisoners, this means those who carried out acts of resistance against a system based upon inequality of race, gender, class, etc., and who are heavily prosecuted because of that. The CCC prisoners have been victims of isolation, didn't have a fair trial, and suffer even to this day under exceptional measures, and they are kept in confinement only because of their political ideas.

It doesn't matter if their choice for the armed struggle is right or wrong - morally or empirically (politically or strategically) - what matters is the fact that people had the courage to act in consequence with their ideas and convictions, in other words people had the courage to be free. Let's not forget that those who have cho-

sen to go underground in the resistance are fully aware as an ever present probability that one day they will be arrested, or possibly killed (there are 28 dead RAF militants to remind us of this fact).

14 ans: Basta!
Liberté pour les
militant(e)s des
Cellulles
Communistes
Combattantes!

We have an impression that those who condemn the CCC because of this (the violence) are often the same ones who close their eyes to the massive structural violence which marks our society, and to the cold cynicism of those in power who use the most brutal and gruesome means to maintain their positions, and for the enormous interests behind this all. Anyone who faces this, who in other words looks the daily reality of class struggle, oppression of women, racist violence, the destruction of nature, etc., in the eye, loses either courage and hope, or every illusion that this system can be changed without violence.

In general, in our democracy, unwelcome ideas are being fought by silencing them to death. If this doesn't work - because the silence is being broken by some hard blows - they are being fought by locking up people, or more "thoroughly" by killing them. As anarchists, we don't believe that this is a solution. Ideas are defeated by open arguments and debate, and by putting your own ideas in practice. We are well aware that anarchists don't own the truth. We are convinced that we still have a lot to learn from those who fought the struggle to its bitter consequences, and from those who continue doing this. Therefore we are willing to discuss with the CCC, and we invite others to do the same.

From October 1984 until their arrest in December 1985, the CCC carried out 26 actions in Belgium. The Cells considered themselves an "organization of militants fighting for the communist revolution", and in a communique from 1985 entitled "To The Workers and Comrades in France," they explained their program of armed propaganda as carried out over the course of three separate campaigns: "The October First Anti-Imperialist Campaign", "Karl Marx Campaign" and the "Pierre Akkerman Campaign".

Q: Since the 1980s, the armed revolutionary struggle has almost disappeared in Europe (except for the IRA and ETA). Action Directe, GRAPO, the Red Brigades (BR), and the CCC all ended their activities. The RAF first announced it was suspending its political-military operations and has recently dissolved itself. Are you aware of this evolution? What do you think about this? Does this point to a new direction for the revolutionary left?

Of course we keep a close eye on the evolution of the revolutionary movement in Europe, but we don't think that things are as simple as your question may suggest. Different groups have stopped for different reasons. The CCC and AD, for example, because they were militarily defeated. The BR because political re-organization was made impossible by repression. The RAF because they have politically degenerated and dissolved themselves. The PCE(r) and GRAPO are still active, and communist and anti-imperialist guerrillas are very strong in Turkey and Greece.

The revolutionary struggle never developed in a uniform and linear way. It's a phenomenon of great complexity, subject to conjunctural and local influences, etc. At the end of the 60s and the beginning of the 70s, a big wave of struggle emerged in Western Europe, although it started to collapse since the mid-80's, that's a fact. But we do think that the next wave to come will be stronger, because of a more favorable socio-economical context as well as because of the rich heritage of experiences and reflections from the previous wave.

The most important merit of the struggle of the RAF in the 70's, of the BR, the PCE(r) and GRAPO, and of the CCC, etc., is the fact that the first steps have been made towards the political orientation and the revolutionary strategy that are presently needed in the imperialist countries. Only by relying on a critical and constructive balance of these 15 years of struggle, and by valuing this decisive contribution, will it be possible for the revolutionary movement to resume the offensive for the overthrow of capitalism and the liquidation of the bourgeoisie.

Q: What makes you think that a new wave of armed struggle is on its way in Europe? This, considering - again - the self-dissolution of the RAF and the peace negotiations in Northern Ireland which seem to indicate the contrary?

These two examples divert our attention from the subject: The RAF already lost sight of the revolutionary objective 15 years ago (and turned in the direction of radical reformism), and the goal of the IRA has never been social revolution but the end of British domination in Northern Ireland. We are only talking here about the armed struggle as an expression of the revolutionary contradictions within the capitalist society.

We are Marxists, we think that social and historical phenomena are dictated by the evolution of objective circumstances, and in the

last resort by the contradiction between the development of the forces of production and the mode of production. These contradictions dictate the necessity today of the overthrow of capitalism and the arrival of socialism.

The central question is: How to bring about the step from capitalism to socialism? Historical study and Engels answer: "Violence is the mid-wife of the entire old society that bears a new society within. It is the means by which the social movement will make it and by which it smashes fossilized and dead political forms."

The practical question is: Which strategy has to be applied for the struggle to accumulate the necessary forces to attain liberation? The experience of the class-struggle in this century and the characteristics of the situation answer: the continuous revolutionary war, of which the first phase is armed propaganda.

Once there exists a revolutionary way out (sure, in this case, very difficult) in a situation which seems to be further completely blocked, one can be sure that this way out will be used one day or the other. First of all, this will be done by the avant-garde elements, later, once the road is laid, by growing parts of social



groups which have an interest in rushing past capitalism.

All this, to say a couple of things very quickly, because the question is very complex. Among the tendencies where people think it opportune to take up weapons only when the masses have already done so and the partisans of "here and now" without any preparation (without a program or organization), one finds a diversity of analyses. Our analysis is situated on a level in between, and one can also quote those who set the foundation of a real Leninist party as a condition to trigger off the armed struggle. We invite the comrades who are interested in our vision on this subject and in the various conclusions we made to take notice of the documents we have exchanged with the French revolutionary organization "Voie Proletarienne" devoted to this question in the debate.

Q: Can you give a short history of why and how you made the choice for armed struggle? Are you still convinced of the choice and the analysis made at the time?

The struggle of the CCC is situated in the spin-off of the break with Soviet revisionism that emerged in the 60s. In this period, the Chinese revolution and the struggle for liberation in the Third World stimulated a new revolutionary trend in the imperialist countries. This trend convicted the Communist Parties who walked behind the banner of the Soviet Union, and every other reformist orientation. At the start of the 70's, the first movements came forward in West Germany and then in Italy, who openly questioned the use of revolutionary violence and the political-military practice to overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie. The CCC are the inheritors of these first experiences, with the advantage of the roads already travelled in the 70s, and they have tried to go even further by taking up the task of giving their share of the answers to the questions which are only put forward by the revolution. In this respect it's worthwhile to state that big theoretical advances often emerge from defeats: Bolshevism is the critical inheritance of the Paris Commune, the cultural revolution is the critical inheritance of the victory of the bourgeois powers in the Soviet Union of the 50s, etc.

So far as militant commitment is concerned, we've never been attracted by violence or armed struggle in and of itself. Communism means peace, brotherhood, and it's this kind of world we fight for. If we really want a world without war and without weapons, a world of brotherhood, then we have to begin to defeat the (fully armed) bourgeoisie in a class war. The rest is only hypocrisy.

One often hears the remark that the CCC came out of nowhere. This is in contradiction with, for example, the militants of the RAF, who chose the armed struggle only after a long evolution among the ranks of the radical non-parliamentarian movement. Your answer is so abstract, it brings only forward purely theoretical considerations. Could you be a bit more concrete?

It is true that the cells aren't the almost-spontaneous, empirical outcome of the radicalization of a non-armed movement, non-parliamentarian or otherwise. But why does it always have to be like that? The history of the international communist movement is not characterized by the eternal repetition of always the same processes but, on the contrary, by assimilation of the lessons from former experiences - and this is only for the better!

To be able to talk explicitly about the foundation of the Cells, we have to state precisely: one person (with this political background) meets another (with a different political background) who knows a third person (with yet another political background), etc. We consider this of minor importance, but if you really insist, we can present things in the following order.

Pierre: This is the road I travelled as a militant. Informal participation in several struggle and protest movements from 1972 onwards; agitation in secondary schools and with students, the denunciation of the coup in Chile, opposi-

tion to the military budgets, the reaction against the last crimes of the Franquist regime, support of the workers of Glaverbel, etc. In 1975 we took part in "le Collectif pour la Liberte d'Expression" (struggle against the project Van den Poorten) and the first political trials. Co-founder in 1976 and afterwards the driving force behind "Comite de soutien aux prisonniers de la RAF" (which changed its name into "Comite de defense des prisonniers politiques en BRD"). Organized the occupation of the Dutch embassy in Brussels to protest against the extradition of three RAF militants to the BRD in the spring of 1978. Arrested in Zurich in the summer of the same year because of the acquisition of ammunition and prohibited from residing in Switzerland under suspicion of "support for a terrorist organization" (in this case: the RAF). Founder of the militant press "Georgi Dimitrov". Co-founder in 1981 of the magazine "Subversion (Revue Internationale pour le communisme)" and in the same period of the organization DOCOM (Documentation Communiste) together with mostly militants of Action Directe who had just been released from prison. Actively engaged in solidarity with French revolutionary Frederic Oriach who was imprisoned again in 1982. Co-founder of the magazine "Ligne Rouge". Participation in the practical and political preparations for the construction of the "Cellules Communistes Combattantes". Exclusive engagement in this struggle since 1983. Beginning in 1984 I went into complete clandestinity, 8 months before the start of the first political-military campaign of the organization. Armed arrest on December 16, 1985.

Bertrand: My history is somewhat shorter but illustrates clearly what we said in the beginning. I was fifteen years old when the RAF kidnapped H.M. Schleyer and sixteen when the Red Brigades kidnapped Aldo Moro. The question of the armed struggle poses itself in other terms for a militant of my generation than for the militants of the former generation. They had to think first of the armed struggle in an imperialist country as a hypotheses, and then they had to take the first steps. For me, the urban guerrilla was already part of the political landscape. I took part in 1978 in the Committee For The Support Of The Prisoners Of The RAF, set up by Pierre; in 1982 I went into revolutionary clandestinity.

Pascale: Details about my militant and political career (which starts also in 1972 with my participation in the movement of secondary schools against the project VDB) will not add anything to what just has been explained. I want though to make clear, if this interests you, that I did not take part in the construction of the Cells. In fact I only joined the Cells and their structures in the autumn of 1985. During the time of the construction and the first actions of the organization, I was an open militant in the collective of the periodical "Ligne Rouge" which made propaganda for the armed communist groups. With "Ligne Rouge" we, among other activities, reproduced the communiques of the Cells in the form of pamphlets which we then distributed them during demonstrations, gatherings, etc.

In your communiques, the CCC describe themselves as a vanguard. Many people have criticized this vanguard concept, the leadership of your organization. The CCC were always willing to accept criticisms, but did you ever seek a real dialogue with the movement (like the RAF eventually did)? Do you still adhere to the principle of the "correct line"? Do you still think it's true that power comes from the barrel of a gun? In other words, doesn't the danger exist that the popular revolution could become dependent on the armed struggle and a political line chosen by a minority of people?

There are a lot of misconceptions here. The CCC never failed to carry their responsibilities, but they did not claim to be the sole authority, the leading party in the sense of Leninism. The name of the CCC itself points to a decidedly different reality in which it is impossible to take on the unifying task of such an organization. Also, the CCC sought to emphasize one of the priorities of the revolutionary movement, which we contributed to, namely reflection and working out political theory.

We think that revolutionary success requires a vanguard organization. What do we mean by that? A fighting structure which brings together and strengthens the best forces from our camp, and this is to be at the head of the proletarian forces within the class struggle. The revolution is not an artwork, it is an historical task in which people must appear as winners. We need to give ourselves the objective, material, and ideological possibilities to achieve victory, and it is the revolutionary vanguard party which opens the first door towards this. Because organization is superior to non-organization, consciousness is better than unconsciousness, and so on.

But the CCC were not this party, although they wanted to work towards building it eventually. The goal of this organizational attempt, the practice of armed propaganda, and the search for political confrontation with all groups with respect to the class struggle, all of this brought the CCC to conclude that they were at the most advanced position in the country - when viewed objectively with respect to the vanguard - both theoretically and practically. And we still believe this today, even though we were defeated.

The political-military campaigns of the CCC in 1984 and 1985 took place within great popular and proletarian mobilizations. They were supported by an important theoretical-political production which called for struggle and critical debate and the triumph of correct analyses and ideas over false ones. For example, the stationing of American missiles in Florennes in 1985 was described by the CCC as imperialist war and a crass manifestation of capitalism, and the group criticized the illusions of petty-bourgeois pacifists. But there was no debate. Some silence, some protest, and even attacks by groups waving red or black flags were the answers we received.

"Power comes from the barrel of a gun", yes that's true. But let's not get everything mixed



Pierre Carette

up. This truth is an exact reflection of human ideas and values in the objective world. Truth is the correct interpretation of reality, something which gives us the possibility of acting in an effective manner. Marxists do not operate on the basis of dreams or following their subjective preferences. They strive to know a historical and social situation as it is, to find the best method to intervene in it and control it (the "correct line"), and in so doing to bring to movement towards socialist revolution, the abolition of paid labor, and to come closer to the end of exploitation and injustice.

Why do you never react on actual themes, for example the struggle of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, the congress of the "Autonomes" in Berlin, or, here in Belgium, the wave of strikes in the Forges de Clabecq, Renault-Vilvoorde, and so on?

As a general rule, when comrades ask us to react on a certain event or ask some advice on a certain subject, we do answer on the given question. But we don't see why we should express ourselves about everything and more. Our imprisonment - and the length of it - removes us from the struggle and from the specific realities, and that is a serious limitation on the knowledge we have and on our ability to contribute in a creative and original way. Searching for a common ground (even revolutionary ones) in an illusionary theater and inevitably always reacting too late on the events isn't really motivating.

But we sure don't absent ourselves from the social actuality and struggles. For example, if we consider in "La Fleche et la Cible" the question of syndicalist action and the revolutionary perspectives of it, or if we write about the strategy for the struggle for the accumulation of the proletarian forces, etc., then we are intervening in the core itself of the questions brought to the fore by the conflicts such as those in Clabecq or Vilvoorde.

Isn't this the only serious way to act, and



the most constructive, also the only possible one today for us in jail? We can deplore this restriction, try to overcome it as much as possible, but it is there, and with the years always heavier to bear.

"The merger of the militants of the CCC with the collaborators of the 'FRAP' is particularly false. The Fighting Communist Cells and this 'FRAP' are complete strangers to each other (this is, by the way, confirmed by the police investigation) and are even political enemies. This merger is a manoeuvre by the powers that be; they want to depoliticize the struggle of the CCC by tying it to the adventure of the 'FRAP', that is by insisting on the common point of one similar penal infraction. Moreover, this merger gives the authorities the guarantee that two precious collaborators are present on the scene of the court. How can the farce otherwise be played?" This paragraph is an extract from the pamphlet "Freedom! Information For The Liberation Of Pierre Carette, Pascale Vandegheerde, And Bertrand Sasseye", distributed by the APAPC. The CCC did distance themselves several times from the FRAP, can you give once more the main reasons for this?

This is a question that we have had to come back to on many occasions (we even edited a complete document in 1990, "Le 'FRAP', provocation et repentir"). This story is of minor interest, let us just recap the essential. Starting in 1985, three attacks took place in Brussels, claimed by a "Front Revolutionnaire d'Action Proletarienne". In fact this "Front" didn't really exist, it was a satellite of the French group Action Directe. The aim? To give the illusion of a real existing "West European Guerrilla Front" as called for by the RAF and AD some time earlier, and to which the CCC in Belgium (and GRAPO in Spain) had refused to join. When the police searched the bases of AD in Brussels, they found documents of the FRAP and they arrested two people. They claimed to be anarchists, but confronted with the repression, they deny their little adventure and made an agreement with the Department of Justice. They were rewarded for this with minor sentences and were soon freed. End of the FRAP.

Why did the CCC refuse to take part in the "anti-imperialist front" called for by the RAF and AD? This seems strange, especially when one knows that the CCC were very close to AD (especially via Frederic Oriach) and that your organization appeared for the first time with the "October First Anti-Imperialist Campaign".

A small correction to begin with: Frederic Oriach was in prison for a long time in France as a militant of the Noyaux Armes Pour l'Autonomie Populaire (NAPAP), the heirs of the military organization of La Gauche Proletarienne (GP), which was founded long before Action Directe, and on a totally different political basis.

He was only "close" to AD in police constructions (and its echoes in the media) which took care that he was jailed for a second time in 1982. In a long interview in 1983, in which he gives details about his rich history as a fighting internationalist communist, Frederic summarizes: "So it's easy to understand that I have nothing to do, near or far, with AD in contradiction with those ludicrous constructions so often made up."

In a famous piece of 1916, "Imperialism, The Highest Stage Of Capitalism", Lenin continues the ingenious historical analyses of Marx and defines the nature of the "parasitism" and decay of capitalism. For the Cellules Communistes Combattantes, the term "imperialism" is situated in this Marxist-Leninist context. For the RAF and AD in the beginning of the 1980s, "imperialist" mainly describes the relationship between dominant countries and dominated countries, a bit like how the Third Worldists see things. So the difference is very big! And this is only one of the many differences above lots of other differences on a philosophical level, in connection with the historical and economic theory, in connection with the political line and the strategy to follow. For example the strategic concept of the "front" looks wrong to us. We believe in a party of the Leninist type as most the important national organizational principle, and an 'internationale' of the Comintern-type as the transnational organizational principle.

In our work of 1993, "La Fleche et la Cible", we have tried to work out our criticism on the concepts of the RAF and AD. In essence we reject its subjectivist character, their tension towards the radical-reformism and to militarism.

Beyond this we can remark that the RAF, who were the driving force behind the "Front", has dissolved itself (which made big headlines in the papers, of course), while GRAPO, who rejected the concept on a basis of fighting communist critics, last month did an daring armed propaganda operation in the heart of Madrid (which was the subject of a total media blackout, of course).

Did you ever have the impression of being manipulated? We ask this question because it's often said that the actions of the CCC, together with the "Gang of Nijvel", were part of a "strategy of tension" organized by the extreme right? In this case references are made to Pierre Carette's brother and to weapons found in CCC safehouses, etc.

From the very start the CCC was subjected to a lot of filthy and contradictory slander from different corners, from the extreme-right (CCC=KGB) to the extreme-left (CCC=CIA), and it has stayed that way until this day.

For some it was necessary, and still is, that the struggle of the CCC - where the goal is crystal clear - is interpreted as something suspicious, with an obscure ground and mysterious objectives, and this is to stop reflection about the political questions and revolutionary strategy. As long as one keeps on talking in terms from bad spy novels, like "manipulations"



Pascale Vandegheerde

and "destabilization", one rejects the central question which really interests the proletariat: Which offensive strategy is best for the class struggle? One darkens this decisive truth, namely that the armed struggle is essential when restarting the revolutionary process, and they isolate these fighters. It's a well-known trick, and one finds the same lies about the Red Brigades in Italy, the GRAPO in Spain, etc. In the early days they said Lenin was a "German spy".

It has been asked before why we don't systematically deny this slander. Let's talk about the examples put forward in the question. Well, what is there to deny? Yes, Pierre has an older brother. So what? Yes, the CCC (and Action Directe and the RAF) were in the possession of arms taken from the attack on the army barracks in Vielsalm in May 1984. So what? Well, strictly put, absolutely nothing. In the end "one believes who one wants to believe".

"Pierre Carette has a brother". Yes, but there are also rumors that he was a member of the secret service and that Pierre Carette was a militant together with his brother in extreme right groups.

We must leave guilt by blood relationship to the classical tragedies, and to the media liars of the PTB. We are not in a position to inform you about military careerist Henri Carette, who was related with extreme right groups at the end of the 60s at the University of Brussels, because Pierre has got the least contact with him. It was their total and definitive ideological contradictions which was the ground for them breaking off all contact with each other.

Why did the actions of the CCC stop after your arrests?

Simply because the objective vulnerability of our organization didn't allow further resistance against the blows against our group and to take the initiative again.

The police offensive of the winter of 1985/86 was not limited to our arrests. It was fol-

lowed by the discovery of our operational bases, of garages and clandestine apartments, by the seizure of important material, and the paralyzing of comrades, etc. This certainly doesn't concern a political decision. Reality has shown that the Cells were badly prepared for repression, on the level of simple structural security, and on a more general political-organizational level. Here we make an allusion to the militaristic deviation that has partly contaminated the CCC, a deviation we have admitted and criticized in "La Flèche et la Cible" and in the debate with Voie Proletarienne.

But even more than our defeat, where we have to learn our lessons, the experience of the CCC in Belgium has shown how the practice of the armed propaganda can be an enormous uplift for revolutionaries.

Can you give a more precise explanation about the split between you and Didier Chevolet?

Didier Chevolet was a militant of the Cellules Communistes Combattantes and after that a member of the collective of prisoners until the summer of 1995. At that time he let us know of his decision to leave the collective and his choice to try to be released in an apolitical way. We have tried, without success, to make him realize that his step was individualistic and in contradiction with our common interest, and that the "apolitical" character of his position was an illusion, because it came out of an objective political situation. We regret this schism very much. We have lost a comrade, and by losing our unity much more than a comrade.

How is the treatment in prison? Are you being held in under special conditions (for example "high security")? Do you have contacts with social prisoners? How are those contacts?

At the time of our arrests in December 1985, we were put in total isolation, a treatment never before seen in Belgium and this was condemned as torture by the well-known humanitarian organizations. In May/June (1986) we held a first collective hungerstrike, lasting 43 days, but without real results. We were held in isolation for three years, even until after our trial, and we only succeeded to reach a discontinuance after a second long and hard hungerstrike.

From then on we were integrated in the prison population, but we were still held under exceptional limitations (for example, non-stop surveillance, opening of mail, limitation of visits, etc.). We must also point out that we are not dependant upon the administrative authorities of the prison, but upon an

obscure committee that works under the Department of Justice.

Our contacts with social prisoners are a priority in solidarity. We try to answer in a positive way on posed questions and systematically we support the common demands and protest movements. During these exchanges we defend the proletarian interests and the principles of the communist morale. We try to develop a just reflection upon the nature of the system and the crime it brings, we fight racism, sexism, etc. But it's still just a drop of water in a desert of misery.

In prison you did several actions. Which and why? In the media there were no articles, the left didn't react. Is the left suspicious about you? Or you against the left? Were you (better) supported by foreign groups?

We held two important hungerstrikes, in 1986 and in 1988, to get out of isolation and to gain the possibility of prolonging our collective political work. The mainstream media were rather discrete about this struggle. What is there to wonder about? They are part of the system. The extreme left didn't react. This needs a double comment. First of all this isn't all that surprising coming from the institutional left (PCB, POS, PTD), it's proof of the profundity of their political and ideological corruption. Secondly, we were surprised by the general leftist movement. The ball is in their camp: Why is there no solidarity, apart from political differences, with revolutionaries confronted with criminal repression in their own country? Isn't this a sign of a terrible weakness?

During the hungerstrikes we were actively supported by the "Association des Parents et Amis des Prisonnier(e)s Communistes". On an international level we were supported concretely by groups and comrades from Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, etc. But the more spontaneous solidarity was clearly stronger on a European level. Once again: Who should draw their lessons?

What can people do for your release?

At this time it is clear that the authorities are not prepared to release us and they will only be prepared to release us when they fear a growth in the mobilization for our cause. They could be worried about the growing interest in the experience of the Cells. In a message on the occasion of "the international day of revolutionary prisoners" we made following statement:

"There are two important reasons why we are held. First of all to hold back from the communist movement fighting militants who have proven their dedication. Secondly they want to terrorize those who, tired of reformist deadend streets, want to go on the revolutionary path."

"We will leave prison when these political motives are unmasked and the protest is so great that the powers that be will see it more advisable to release us than to appear in their real



Bertrand Sassoye

form, rather this than to attract the attention on the causes that force them to this hardness towards us, who are only three with many years in prison behind them.

This will be a long struggle where all good will is welcome. This struggle will be won, which will please us of course, but this above all will serve the general struggle of the proletariat. Without the last we wouldn't afford ourselves such public calls for solidarity. But this solidarity fills us with force, trust, and enthusiasm."

What needs to be done? It is necessary to develop a public militant agitation: set up local committees, organize information gatherings, make dynamic and well-sounding interventions, etc. Everything which can break the wall of silence, built and maintained by the powers and their accomplices, will put us a step further towards freedom.

(Source: Anarchist Black Cross - Gent <<http://www.xs4all.be/~ance/abc-gent>>)

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A Brief History Of The Armed Struggle Of GRAPO In Spain

The First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Groups (GRAPO) were formed in the summer of 1975. At that time twenty members of the Re-constituted Spanish Communist Party (PCE-r), an underground party formed five months before, carried out their first armed action against the fascist security forces. On August 2, 1975 two Guardia Civil (Civil Guard) members were shot in the centre of Madrid. One died and another was seriously injured. This was the first strike back of GRAPO against the wave of fascist-inspired terror known as "the summer of terror".

The PCE(r) had its own "technical section" created to carry out expropriations of banks to support the revolutionary struggle and punish police informers. From the core of this section emerged GRAPO.

On October 1, 1975 five different GRAPO commandos executed four policemen and seriously injured another one in Madrid. This was their answer to the assassinations of five anti-fascists (two members of ETA and three members of the now defunct FRAP organization) killed on September 27, by police firing squads applying death penalties ordered by the military authorities.

GRAPO didn't claim responsibility for these actions until July 8, 1976 when 60 bombs blasted fascist targets throughout the country. It was the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War won by the fascists.

In January 1977 the police arrested 40 PCE(r) and GRAPO members in Madrid and Barcelona and succeeded in freeing Lieutenant-General Villaescusa and a member of the Spanish oligarchy Oriol, who had been kept prisoner by GRAPO commandos for 60 days in order to exchange them for political prisoners and to force the government to apply an amnesty. A few days before two GRAPO commandos had executed two policemen and one Civil Guard in Madrid and injured three more Civil Guards in two separate attacks on the fascist forces as a reaction to the killings of five leftist lawyers by a paramilitary gang acting under Civil Guard orders.

On June 4, two Civil Guards were shot dead in Barcelona, this was the day of the first general election since 1936 and the reformist farce was going on. This action was a clear sign that showed that the revolutionary organizations would not accept the renewal of fascism under any "democratic" mask.

On September 27, 1977, Captain Herguedas, of the National Police was shot dead by a GRAPO commando in Madrid. He had been one of the fascist volunteers who executed five anti-fascists just two years earlier.

In 1977 and 1978 GRAPO actions continued, mainly bomb attacks against army and military quarters but also against government fa-

cilities. Some selective assassinations were also carried out. On March 22, 1978, the General Manager of Prisons was shot dead near his house in Madrid. He was responsible for the killing of an anarchist prisoner in Carabanchel Prison, who was beaten to death by guards who tried to get information from him about an escape plan of GRAPO and PCE(r) prisoners.

1979 was the year in which GRAPO carried out its most actions: on January 9 a judge from the Supreme Court was shot dead, on March 5 an Army General was executed when his car was attacked by a GRAPO team on a centre street of Madrid, and on April 6, a chief of the "Antiterrorist" Brigade of the National Police (NP) was executed in Seville. Altogether 20 members of the fascist police were executed that year in a combination of actions by the urban guerrilla throughout the country, and there were many bombs attacks that year as well.

On the other hand GRAPO and PCE(r) militants payed a high price for this: 100 people were jailed - accused of membership in these organizations. (Police claimed that the PCE(r) and GRAPO were the same thing and many PCE(r) militants were arrested without any evidence against them. The Party was banned again, just as it had been under the military dictatorship). Seven members of the PCE(r) and GRAPO were killed by the police that year. On June 28, Martin Eizaguirre and Fernandez Cario were assassinated by a special team of the Spanish military secret service in Paris. They were members of the Committee of Foreign Relations of the PCE(r) and were in exile. On April 20, Juan Carlos Delgado de Codes, a member of the Central Committee of the PCE(r) was shot dead by the police in Madrid - he was unarmed and didn't belong to the guerrilla. Between April and May GRAPO carried out 30 armed actions in response to the killing of Delgado de Codes. This was later criticized by the Central Commando of GRAPO and the PCE(r) as a falling into blind militaristic tactics. From that moment on GRAPO aimed all its efforts at maintaining the armed struggle and giving it a protracted character, assuming that it is not only possible but also necessary to follow a Protracted People's War strategy and that it is possible to develop this strategy in a developed European country.

On December 17, 1979 five prisoners of GRAPO escaped from Zamora jail through a tunnel dug for months by GRAPO and PCE(r) prisoners (some of them were miners). It was a real shock for the government, which tried to recapture them at any cost. Three of them were finally killed by the police (in 1980, 1981 and



1982) and the other two were recaptured shortly after they rejoined the struggle.

In 1980 and 1981 GRAPO was a weak organization due to the repression carried out against its supporters. In these years GRAPO carried out eight executions, including two Army Generals and one Colonel to denounce the role played by the army in the dirty war and counterinsurgency. A few policemen and civil guards were also executed. GRAPO, as an organization that aims at becoming the core of the future People's Army has never targeted innocent civilians nor used dangerous devices against civilians in its military actions and sabotage. In 1980-81 nine members of GRAPO were killed by the police in a clear shoot-to-kill policy. One PCE(r) militant died as consequence of torture in 1980 and on June 19, 1981, Crespo Galende, PCE(r) prisoner, died in a hunger strike (he lasted 94 days) against the policy of torture, isolation and annihilation of the political prisoners. The government was forced to reunify the prisoners and allow them to keep their Communes in the jails. (The Karl Marx Commune - 80 prisoners of PCE(r) and GRAPO - in Soria Prison lasted until 1989 when the social-fascist government dismantled it).

In October 1982 the PSOE (social-fascists) came to power. The PSOE began by killing Juan Martin Luna, leader of GRAPO, who was shot six times in Barcelona in an undercover-operation. He was unarmed, and some years later three policemen were charged with murder, but they were acquitted. On the eve of the elections, (October 28), GRAPO planted 30

bombs in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and twelve other parts of the country. The blasts were aimed at promoting a boycott and to denounce the electoral farce.

In 1983 and 1984 GRAPO recovered from its previous weakness and carried out many armed actions. During this time GRAPO carried out about 70 bomb attacks - aimed at police targets, in support of worker's strikes, in support of other countries revolutionaries, etc., and also against the bourgeois mass media (eg., bomb attack against the German consulate in support of the RAF prisoners, bomb against the Employers organization)...

During this time GRAPO also carried out some executions. In April 1983, a Lieutenant of the National Police and a Civil Guard were executed in Valencia and Coruna, the first one by a bomb in his car and the second one was shot dead.

On January 2, 1984 two policemen were shot dead in Madrid. 1984 saw GRAPO make frantic efforts to support the proletarian struggles throughout the country (46 bombs attacks that year), to strike back against the repressive forces and to collect the revolutionary taxes needed to keep the struggle alive (100 businessmen paid the revolutionary tax that year). On September 5, three separate GRAPO commandos launched an offensive to force the exploiters to pay the revolutionary tax. In Madrid a businessman who had refused to pay was shot dead and in Seville another GRAPO team executed Manuel de la Padure, a well-known businessman and chairman of the Employer's Association. In Coruna the head of the National Radio Broadcasting was seriously injured in retaliation for his counter-revolutionary propaganda. This was a warning to the reactionary mass media which continually discredits the revolutionary struggle. One of the GRAPO militants who had carried out the action in Coruna was killed by the police some hours later and another one was injured and captured when the GEO-Squad (NP special assault squad) raided the house where they were hidden.

The repression launched against GRAPO and the PCE(r) that year was very harsh. In June, Manuel Perez Martinez "comrade Arenas," secretary general of the PCE(r) left prison after having been jailed since 1977 accused of "unlawful association". He, as many other former prisoners of the PCE(r), had to go underground again as the only way of developing the struggle away from police control. Since the 70's some of the PCE(r) and GRAPO leadership and clandestine organization has been based in France, and the Spanish police have never been able to destroy it.

On January 19, 1985, the Spanish political police succeeded in capturing most of the GRAPO militants in Spain: 19 of them were captured in nine different provinces, the police discovered 17 apartments, lots of weapons and ammunition and money collected through the revolutionary tax. This disaster was possible due to the breaking of many security and clandestine rules by GRAPO in its aim of carrying out too many actions in support of the people's struggles. The strict compartmentalization within

the organization had been broken and this allowed the police to carry out this strong strike in only forty-eight hours.

The reorganization of GRAPO was slow and difficult, in 1985 it almost ceased to exist but the spirit of sacrifice of the new militants, most of them without any previous guerrilla experience, allowed the struggle to continue. In 1985 and 1986 they carried out some bank expropriations, some went wrong and seven GRAPO members were captured. Money had become the main problem since they were not strong enough to collect the revolutionary tax - they needed apartments, cars, and facilities to develop the urban guerrilla successfully from the underground. Weapons were also desperately needed.

1987 was a small turning point. In that year they carried out six armed actions according to police sources. There were some successful bank expropriations (small ones) and a headquarters of the local police in Malaga was attacked to obtain weapons. Three constables were disarmed and tied up. (They were not executed as they were not considered proper targets. The local police are mainly concerned with motor vehicle traffic and play no special repressive role). In another operation, a GRAPO commando tried to attack a National Police station in Valence to seize blank identity cards - there was a shooting and a policeman was seriously injured.

In 1988 GRAPO carried out some armed actions to collect the revolutionary tax again. On May 27 the President of the Bank of Galicia was shot dead in his house; he had refused to pay the tax and had alerted the police about GRAPO activity. He was a well-known exploiter who had impoverished many people (especially poor farmers), and he was also responsible for the closing of many factories due to banking speculation. Two months later another businessman was shot and seriously wounded.

On October 4, GRAPO succeeded in seizing 800 blank identity cards from a police station in the centre of Madrid. A policeman was shot dead and his weapon seized. (Most of GRAPO's weapons came from its actions against the police and security guards).

On March 10, 1989 GRAPO executed two Civil Guards in Santiago, the same day that the TREVI group was having a meeting in Madrid. (TREVI was then the visible head of repres-

sion in western Europe). In July 1989 GRAPO solved their money problems by expropriating 148 million pesetas (one million dollars) from a bank in Castellon.

In November the political prisoners of PCE(r) and GRAPO started an indefinite hunger strike demanding an end to isolation and their reunification in a single prison. (The political prisoner's communes had been dismantled by the PSOE government in 1987). To support the struggle of the prisoners GRAPO launched an offensive in December. On the 13th an Army Commander was shot in Madrid and seriously injured; on the 15th an Army Colonel was shot three times and seriously injured in Valencia; on the 18th a member of the secret police was shot dead near Barcelona while he was leaving his house, and on the 28th two Civil Guards were executed in Gijon while they were guarding an official building. The government's response was to arrest militants of the PCE(r), jail them and blame them for these armed actions. (One of the lies spread by the mass media is that GRAPO members are recruited only from among the militants of the PCE(r), so trying to present this clandestine revolutionary party as the "political branch" of GRAPO).

As the hunger strike went on many prisoners were moved to hospitals where they were chained to their beds, disturbed by police and forced to receive "forced feeding" in a desperate and torturous measure by the government to avoid the death of these revolutionaries at that very moment (preferring instead to annihilate them slowly and silently in the prisons).

On March 27, 1990, a GRAPO commando executed doctor Munoz in Zaragoza. In their statement GRAPO called him "a torturer" ready to follow the government's instructions to submit the prisoners to the agony and torture of the forced feeding. He had refused orders from a judge to stop this kind of torture and was a firm supporter of the government plans of extermination. (As well, he was a cousin of the Spanish Attorney General). As a consequence of the force feeding the hunger strike became very prolonged. On May 25, Jose Manuel Sevillano Martin died after 177 days on hunger strike - he was a member of GRAPO and had been imprisoned since 1987. GRAPO decided to avoid entering into a tit-for-tat battle - because this could only benefit the already alert security forces



First of October Antifascist Resistance Groups (GRAPO) Communique

In the dawn of April 7th, an active commando of our organization, the First of October Antifascist Resistance Groups (GRAPO), has demolished by means of a powerful explosive charge the interior of the Valle de los Caídos Basilica, the funeral monument where the mortal remains of the main heads of the Spanish State are buried and which was inaugurated by the dictator Franco forty years ago.

The Valle de los Caídos Basilica is one of the most clear examples of the persistence of the fascist regime and has always aroused the hatred of the masses since it represents the sweeping away of their democratic rights and liberties. The fascist regime is still standing and this is also proven by the fact that, after more than twenty years of "democratic" reforms, the men and women that fought against it the most are still in the prisons. Many of them for more than twenty years - even when they have already served their sentences. It is also proven by the amnesty given to those who were responsible for the GAL [so-called Anti-Terrorist Groups of Liberation, in reality government death squads responsible for the killing of 27 Basques between 1983-87 - ed.] while at the same time it imprisoned the National Leadership of Herri Batasuna and continues the

dirty war with their practice of torture and political assassinations such as that against ETA member Jose Luis Geresta Mujika.

This action against the Valle de los Caídos Basilica joins others recently carried out by our groups of which we highlight the following:

- Placement of explosive devices in the facilities of the Cope Radio Broadcast in Barcelona on August 5, 1998, in the Temporary Employment Agencies "Alta Gestión" in Vigo on November 6, 1998 and "Adecco" located in Marques de Vadillo in Madrid on November 25, 1998.

- Bombing of the Temporary Employment Agency "Unitrab" located on Lérida street in Madrid on November 12, 1998, and the National Institute of Labour, Health and Security in Ciudad Lineal, Madrid on November 13, 1998.

- Bombing of the central offices of the Catalonian Employer's Association in Barcelona and of the Young Businessman Association of Baix Llobregat in Cornellà, both on December 30, 1998.

It is clear that under this regime, we, the workers, cannot expect a solution to the many problems that affect us directly and that the



capitalist economic crisis is sharpening more and more each day. Neither can we expect the least economic, social or political concessions of the Spanish oligarchy in a peaceful manner. The ones that have imposed themselves by means of arms and terror and are still maintaining themselves in power by arms, must be overthrown by arms. For this reason, we have to fight resolutely, uniting the popular masses and increasing the resistance everywhere.

**There Is No Truce Against Fascism!
Join The Resistance!
Let's Unite Our Forces!
Forward With The
People's Resistance Movement!**

Central Command of the First of October Antifascist Resistance Groups (GRAPO)
April 12, 1999

and after a retaliation action (the execution of an Army Colonel on June 15 in Valladolid) centred themselves on carrying out an offensive to take the initiative again in September.

In September 1990 GRAPO planted six bombs in Madrid, Tarragona, Barcelona and Gijón. On the 6th three bombs went off in Madrid (one in the Stock Exchange, another one in the Supreme Court and the last one in the Ministry of Economy). None of these actions resulted in any civilian casualties. On September 8, a bomb blasted petrol facilities in Tarragona causing damage of 3 million dollars; and on the 10th the PSOE central office in Barcelona was bombed causing damages valued at 100,000 dollars. September ended with a GRAPO action in Gijón in which a commando raided an official building seizing one thousand blank driving licenses and then planted a bomb that blasted the facilities. In November 1990 two more bombs rocked two official buildings in Barcelona.

In 1991 and 1992 GRAPO continued with its bombing campaign against official buildings: in April 1992 GRAPO bombed the National Institute of Industry and the Ministry of Employment in Madrid, two Civil Guards were injured. One year earlier, in February 1991 a GRAPO bomb cut, for six hours, the military NATO pipeline that supplies the U.S. air bases in Spain. The intent was to sabotage this pipeline which was being used by the U.S. B-52 Superfortresses that had devastated Iraqi cities. There were

also sabotage actions against the facilities of the energy monopolies in 1991 and 1992 as well as bank expropriations.

In 1993 three GRAPO militants died in Zaragoza in an attack on an armoured car that was blown up with explosives to expropriate the funds that it contained. One security guard died and two more were seriously injured. That year seven bombs exploded in official buildings in Madrid (in the Employers Association, PSOE offices, and other offices involved in the industrial reconversion which had laid off thousands of workers).

In 1994 GRAPO actions were intended to seize funds that were desperately needed. Some expropriations were carried out. In January two bombs exploded in Madrid on the eve of a general strike, a Tax office and an Unemployment office were bombed. In July and December two armoured cars were attacked and money was expropriated (about a half million dollars).

In 1995 GRAPO carried out one of the most important and decisive actions of the last few years. On June 27 they kidnapped Publio Cordon, wealthy businessman and president of the insurance company PREVIASA; he was freed on August 17 in Barcelona after paying 400 million pesetas (about three million dollars). He had to pay another 800 million pesetas after his liberation but he decided to flee (his businesses are not very clean, he was also consul of Guatemala and has important business in

that country.) In November the police arrested three GRAPO members in Barcelona and Valencia but they could not recover the money.

Nowadays it seems that GRAPO is undergoing a new re-organization and one thing is very clear: the fascist Spanish state has lost the battle in the sense that it has not been able to annihilate the armed organization nor the revolutionary party, the PCE(r).

In the past 21 years, 3,000 people have been arrested by the police in relation to GRAPO and the PCE(r), of which 1,400 have been jailed. Nowadays there are 54 prisoners of PCE(r) and GRAPO in Spanish jails. From 1975 to 1995 GRAPO has carried out 60 executions, more than 300 bombs have been planted and over 3,000 armed actions have been carried out. (The Spanish government recognizes 545.)

Twenty GRAPO militants have died by police action or as a result of premature explosions. Seven PCE(r) militants have been killed by the police and paramilitary gangs. According to police sources there about 100 PCE(r) and GRAPO members in clandestinity.

We hope this brief history of the armed struggle of GRAPO - unique due to the Protracted People's War strategy followed by the PCE(r) and GRAPO - has been useful and interesting.

Association Of Relatives And Friends Of Political Prisoners (AFAPP)

Freedom For Francisco Brotons Beneyto, Now!

Francisco Brotons Beneyto, Communist 22 Years In The State Dungeons, Kidnapped By The Regime

He was born in Petrel (Alicante) in 1944. His father was a wood lathe operator and his mother was a shoe trimmer. When he was 11 years old he entered a technical college in Madrid, where he learned the trade of die-stamping adjuster. At the same time he studied in the evening high school courses, and later he entered university where he studied the first two years of Engineering. In order to pay his studies he worked as a mechanic, administrative assistant, teaching in schools and giving private classes...

By the end of the 1960s he started to be politically active in different organizations of the communist left. In 1973 he joined the OMLE (Organization of Marxist-Leninists of Spain). He participated in the preparation of the Reconstitutive Congress of the PCE(r) in 1975. In January 1977 he assumed the responsibility of leading GRAPO. He participated as a delegate in the 2nd Congress of the PCE(r) where he was elected to be a member of the Political Commission of the Party. He was arrested on October 9, 1977 in Benidorm together with the Central Committee of the PCE(r).

Together with Enrique Cerdan Calixto, Abelardo Collazo Arauxo, Fernando Hierro Chomon and Juan Martin Luna, on December 17, 1979, he regained freedom through a tunnel which they dug over 9 months using improvised tools and avoiding the constant searches which, at that time, were made by the police themselves inside the prisons. Once outside and after getting in touch with the comrades in the underground, he assumed again the leadership of GRAPO (First of October Anti-Fascist Groups) until his re-arrest on September 20, 1980. Since then, he has been in fourteen prisons. He is now in the Seville-II prison.

He has participated in more than twenty hungerstrikes. Strikes of solidarity, to denounce the political manouevres of the regime, and, mainly, hungerstrikes to achieve decent living conditions in the prisons. We can highlight two of the latter: that of 1981 against the extermination regime of the Herrera de la Mancha prison, that cost the life of Juan Jose Crespo Galende, and the one that lasted from December 1989 to February 1991 in which Jose Manuel Sevillano Martin died. During this latter hungerstrike Brotons was repeatedly transferred from jail to jail and from hospital to hospital, handcuffed to his bed for long periods of time and submitted to harrassment by the policemen who guarded him. In 1990 he suffered a heart attack, escaping death only by the fact that he was already in a hospital and under medical care. When he started the hungerstrike he was 72 kilos, when he finished it he was under 39 kilos.

This communist should have been released four years ago according to the regime's own

laws. However, not satisfied with this prolonging of his sentence, the PP [Partido Popular - ruling party - ed.] government plans to keep him in prison for another four years: penitentiary institutions and their friends, the judges, refuse to apply to him the sentence reductions that correspond to him by law. For that, they assert that these reductions are annulled by his escape from Zamora prison in 1979 together with four comrades, even if this is not provided for in any judicial sentence.

The truth of the matter is that they do not forgive him the audacity of having broken down the walls of their dungeons and even less that he did so in order to undertake the reorganization of GRAPO, who at that time were decimated by police repression. In fact, the police declared a death penalty upon all the fugitives: Abelardo Collazo Arauxo, Enrique Cerdan Calixto and Juan Martin Luna were assassinated in police ambushes; only Brotons and Fernando Hierro Chomon saved their lives since they were in crowded places at the time of their arrests.

Neither do they forgive him the fact that even in the conditions of isolation and dispersion, censorship of communications and any kind of restrictions which he has endured during these 22 years, he and his comrades have continued denouncing the fascist and terrorist character of the Spanish State, giving an example of revolutionary commitment and strength, always in the front line of the struggle carried out by the political prisoners against the repressive onslaughts of the regime.

We still have in our minds his skeletal image in the longer hunger strike maintained up to this moment: 440 days and nights; images that reminded those of the Nazi concentration camps, that exposed the cruel and paranoid stubbornness and degradation of the PSOE government. The hungerstrikers only demanded to be regrouped in the same prison in order to carry out an ordered life in accordance with their communist policy and ideology. It was too much dignity for the cowardly vermin of the government.

Brotons is in prison because he has fought for the people's and working-class interests.

These are the real reasons for his never-ending kidnapping: the class hatred of the Falangists disguised into 'democrats' of the parliament of his gracious majesty and their filthy spirit of revenge.

The prolonging of his imprisonment is also meant to be a lesson for all those who struggle against the system.

It is the duty of all to support him in the denouncement of his situation.

**We Have to Stop this Fascist Revenge!
Immediate Freedom for Francisco Brotons!
Amnesty for All the Political Prisoners!**

(Source: Published by the Communist Party of Spain (reconstituted) - December, 1999)

AFAPP Statement

Francisco Brotons Beneyto has been imprisoned for 22 years. He was arrested before the so-called Amnesty of 1977. This leader of the PCE(r) and GRAPO is one of the political prisoners that were excluded by the regime from that achievement of the People's Movement. From that moment he became one of the victims of all the repressive plans carried out against the imprisoned revolutionaries by the different governments of UCD, PSOE and PP, addressed to inflict an additional punishment and to achieve their renouncement of their anti-fascist and democratic beliefs.

Brotons has already served his sentence - no prisoner can remain in prison for more than 20 consecutive years. In spite of this, the PP government is prolonging the imprisonment and punishment of this revolutionary. This is mainly for two reasons: because they have not succeeded in crushing his spirit in spite of all their repeated attempts to make him abandon his communist beliefs and because they are using the prolongation of his imprisonment as a revenge for his combative stand. Throughout these years of imprisonment, Broton has always been one of the political prisoners who have headed the resistance to the repressive plans applied within the jails. He has suffered isolation and has taken part in many and prolonged hungerstrikes in defence of dignity and of his beliefs. Only a few months ago, Aznar's government did not allow him to see his father when he was dying and afterwards did not allow him to attend his father's funeral to say his last farewell to him.

This special punishment inflicted on Brotons shows the cowardly, cruel and fascist nature of the Bourbonic Monarchy and shows it in its full brutality, if we don't lose sight of the treatment given to the GAL killers and the corrupters of the system, who were freed immediately after having been sentenced to tens of years of imprisonment by their own courts.

The Spanish regime is punishing in the person of Brotons the workers, the youth and all those men and women who rebel against injustice and struggle for the democratic liberties.

For all these reasons, AFAPP, besides denouncing once again the situation of imprisonment in which this revolutionary remains, calls upon the workers, the youth and their organizations to make this struggle theirs and to adhere to the campaign that we start to achieve his immediate release, since his dignity and his stand of resistance are our own dignity and resistance.

Stop The Injustice! Amnesty!

Association of Relatives and Friends of the Political Prisoners (AFAPP)
October 1999

"Repression In The Prisons Is Actually Greater Than It Was 20 Years Ago"

Interview With Eva Alonso, GRAPO Political Prisoner

Eva Alonso Arce was arrested May 26, 1979 at a Spanish Civil Guard police checkpoint near Valencia. During the ten days that she remained under arrest in Madrid she was brutally tortured. Today, she has been in prison over twenty years in the prisons of Yeserias, Carabanchel, and Sevilla II, from which she will be released in June 1999.

Over the past 20 years, what have been the worst and best moments you have had to go through?

It is difficult to choose, but perhaps the hardest experiences that I have lived through have been the two hungerstrikes to the death that the prisoners of the PCE (r) (Spanish Communist Party - reconstituted) and GRAPO have had to carry out. The first was in 1981, against the extermination regime in the prison of Herrera de la Mancha and the second was in 1990 around the regroupment of the prisoners. The deaths of Kepa and Sevi were the worst moments inside a very hard situation, and still today, just the memory of it makes me tremble. As for good moments, I would emphasize small,

but very important, things, such as family visits, meeting comrades again after years of dispersion, or activities that I can do in the community.

Is the suffering greater for women in prison, or, as militants, are the attacks and responses the same?

The repression is maybe one of the few areas in which we reach true equality. The key is that we are not women or men, we are imprisoned militants. The repressive strategies are the same for everybody as are the targets that they are after with them. Of course, we confront this in a militant manner, and this depends on your commitment, not your gender.

Have there been, over the course of the past 20 years, many changes in the methods of repression in the prisons?

They have been perfecting them, overall, after building the maxi-prisons and the policy of dispersion. They have been exploiting all the possibilities of isolation and have been doing

their utmost against our movement. All this, together with the standard searches, beatings, and provocations, is doing in that the repression in the prisons is growing in vileness compared to what we had 20 years ago. The wardens, on the whole, also take part, but, individually, there are some that make your life hell, some that merely do their "job", and, less often, those that try to make your life a bit sweeter.

How important is it to be grouped together in one prison?

Absolutely everything. It is important politically to be able to organize inside prison, to be able to increase your activities with your comrades, to defend yourself against repression and to undertake the struggle effectively. It is important on a personal level as well; because you have people that see the world as you do, with many things in common with which you can always support yourself. Prison is a hostile environment, the only things not hostile are your comrades. It has been proved that it is possible to survive years and years without them, as a person and as a militant, and that is a great victory, but it is infinitely harder.

What is the role of family and friends in giving support to the prisoners, and especially around their dispersion?

In prison, any amount of support, solidarity or consideration has an incredible value, and it is worth much more than on the streets. It is not what makes your want to resist, but it makes it easier to live in prison. To get some mail, to get a visit from somebody, these are things that can make you smile at a time when you are feeling sad or lonely.

How were the peace talks between the Spanish government and GRAPO viewed from prison?

With certain expectations, but little worry, because there were very important matters on the table. But beyond the expectations, I viewed it with distrust towards the State, it is obvious that its intentions to solve the problems peacefully are void. They trust in the repression and in force to exterminate any struggle or groups that faces them, and that fact makes this kind of process always unsuccessful. In our case this was clearly proved. There was never negotiation, only talks towards negotiation, and when the government had to put forward its intentions, it only tried to bring us to surrender.

What is the situation of the GRAPO prisoners, especially those who are ill and have already served 3/4 of their sentence?

We have four comrades who are trying to *continued on the next page...*

Communiqué From The Women Political Prisoners Of GRAPO

To Working Women!

We are fifty-six prisoners from ETA, two from the EPGC and fourteen from the PCE(r) and GRAPO, held in the prisons of the fascist State. We are well acquainted with the things they try and forget - their weapons, their humiliations, their days and nights of torture and darkness.

We have rebelled against the capitalist system that exploits and oppresses us twice over. We have said "Enough!" - that is why they keep us in prison. That is why they try to silence us behind their walls and cages.

We have said "Enough!" and, like every other day, on March 8th we also intend to struggle with you against discrimination in the workplace, against lower wages for working women, against layoffs.

"Enough!" to unemployment, to starvation wages, to the bosses and governments that exploit us, that oppress us just as they do our class brothers.

We have said "Enough!" and we intend to struggle with you against the inequality of opportunity, against sexual harassment, against the fact that we are treated like objects fated to fulfill men's needs. "Enough!" because they continue to deny young women the right to a free and secular education, to dignified work, to housing, to a future, for they continue to develop their distress.

We have said "Enough!" and we intend to struggle with you to seize the right to con-

trol our own bodies, to be done with the humiliation of outrageous sentences that condemn us women rather than those who rape and assault us. "Enough!" of their laws and their fascist courts, of their criminalization of the right to strike, to demonstrate, to free expression and free assembly.

We have said "Enough!" and we intend to struggle with you to seize our liberation and that of our peoples. "Enough!" to those who continue to trample the right to self-determination, to those who by iron and blood stop people from freely deciding their future in Euskal Herria, in Catalonia and in Galicia.

We have said "Enough!", comrades, and we have embarked upon the road of revolution and socialism, the only road that will bring us liberation, as women and as workers. Because of this they keep us in prison and mistreat us in every way to prevent our rebellion from reaching you.

But today, like every day, like every March 8th, we are with you in struggle to see an end to the fascist prisons, to seize our rights and those of our class, to destroy all the rusted chains that are binding us.

**For A March 8th Of Struggle!
Amnesty For The Political Prisoners!**

Female Political Prisoners from the PCE(r) and GRAPO, "Lina Odena" Commune, Soto del Real
March 8, 1999

...continued from the previous page



obtain their freedom due to the severity of their illnesses. Two have been imprisoned for 17 years and the other two for 14 years, so they are not going to be able to help the movement much when they get out. With regards to freedom for those who have served 3/4 of their sentence, there are quite a few of us who have exceeded that years ago. I accomplished that in June 1994. None of us in this situation have ever been released on parole.

What do you think of the support that the Basque people give to the prisoners?

The struggle to support the prisoners in the Basque country has always seemed admirable to me. I do not think that we can ask for more

courage and initiative than what our people have with their prisoners. Nevertheless, I do not think that the time for struggle and sacrifice is over, and I fear that we will have to restart strongly all sorts of initiatives to approach the prisoners of the Basque country, or better yet, get them free. The Spanish state does not seem to have any intention of solving this politically, it leaves us with the struggle as the only way.

After these long years, you must have felt low at times when a personal way out of prison and suffering might have been a priority.

No, never. Of course, over these past 20 years I have had very tough moments, when I felt too weak to stick to my own commitment, but I always knew that there was a line I would not cross, a line that situates me alongside the people, and to cross that line would be to put myself in front of them. Loyalty to my ideas and to the people gave me the strength to resist, and now I will leave prison having a clear conscience.

How do you imagine your life outside of prison?

I entered prison when I was 17 years old, and I am leaving prison 20 years later. Mostly, I want to meet my people again, I have a lot to learn. After that, I will see.

May 1999



European Political Prisoners

ATS Note: This is a vastly incomplete list of the political prisoners in Europe. Due to lack of space and information we are unable to include the many Irish and Basque prisoners as well many more revolutionaries from Turkey, Kurdistan, etc. that are in various European prisons...

France

Nathalie Ménigon 2173 J
Joëlle Aubron 2174 K
Centre de Déention
de Bapaume
Quartier Femmes
Chemin des Anzacs
62450 Bapaume

Jean Marc Rouillan
969 B 202
BP 166
65307 Lannemezan

Italy

Susan Berardi
Carla Bianco
Tiziana Cherubini
Barbara Fabrizi
Fulvia Matarazzo
Teresa Romeo
Marina Sarnelli
Caterina Spano
Latina
Via Aspromonte 100
04100 Latina

Alberta Biliato
Aurora Betti
Opera
Via Campognago
loc. Quintosole
20090 Opera (Mi)

Marco Venturini
Sollicciano
Carcere
50142 Sollicciano (Fi)

Nicola Abbatangelo
Giuseppe Armante
Renato Bandoli
Vittorio Bolognese
Lorenzo Calzone
Pietro Coccione
Giuseppe DiCecco
Francesco Donati

Luciano Farina
Antonio Fosso
Franco Galloni
Bruno Ghirardi
Enzo Grilli

Franco Grilli
Flavio Lori
Fausto Marini
Machele Mazzei
Fabio Ravalli

Giovanni Senzani
Alermo Virgili
Trani
Via Andria 300
70059 Trani (Ba)

Clara Clerici
Ferrara
Gloria Argano
Josphine Abdo Sarkis
Maria Capello
Anna Cotone
Roselia Lupo
Vincenza Vaccaro
Rebbibia Femminile
Via Bartolo longo, 92
00156 Rome

Natalia Ligas
Messina
Via C. Valeria 2 Gazzi
98100 Messina

Francesco Aiosa
Marco Camenisch
Giorgio Colla
Salvatore Colonna
Nicola De Maria
Cesare Di Lenardo
Davaide Fadda
Pietro Guido Felice
Maurizio Ferrari
Daniele Bencini
Franco La Maestra
Stefano Minguzzi
Mauro Mereo
Mario Mirra
Marcello Ghiringhelli
Ario Pizzarelli
Paolo Dorigo
Ahmed Ali H. Sereya
Novara
Via sforzesca 49
28100 Novara

Francesco Caviglia
Carlo Garavaglia
Rebbibia Maschile (G12)
V.Raffaella Maietti 156
00156 Rome

Giovani Gentile Schiavone
Michele Pegna
Stefano Scarabello
Carolina
Via S. Biagio, 6
81030 Cariola (Ce)

Maria Pia Vianale
Udine
Via Spalato 30
33100 Udine

Spain

Anna Garcia Rueda
Encarncion Leon Lara
Maria Jesus Romero Vega
Mercedes Padros Cominas
Olga Oliviera Alonso

Rosario Narvaez Ternero
Prison De Avila
C.P. Brieva
Apartado 206 - 05194 Avila

Jesus Cela Seoane
Prison De Badajoz
Carretera Livenza, km. 5 - 06008 -
Badajoz

Francisco Javier Ros Diaz
Franciso Cela Seoane
Guillermo Vasquez Bautista
Joaquin Calero Arcones
Jose Jimenez Fernandez
Juan Jose Donoso Pulido
Luis Cabeza Mato
Prison De Herrera De La Mancha
Apartado 77
13200 - Manzanares - Ciudad Real

Laureano Ortega Ortega
Prison De Madrid II (Meco)
28880 Alcala De Henares - Madrid

Jose Ortin Martinez
Rogelio Vasquez Gomez
Prison De Madrid (III) (Valdemoro)
28340 Valdemoro - Madrid

Javier Calcerrada Fornieles
Leoncio Calcerrada Fornieles
Prison De Ocana I
Martires de Ocana, 4
45300 Ocana - Toledo

Jaime Simon Quintela
Prison De Puerto De Santa Maria II
Apartado 600
11500 Puerto De Santa Maria -
Cadiz

Elvira Dieguez Silveira
Enrique Cuadra Etxeandia
Francisco Brotons Beneyto
Joaquin Garrido Gonzalez
Jose Balmon Castell
Prison De Sevilla 2
Carretera torreblanca Mairena del
Alcor, Km.3
Sevilla - 41071 - Apartado 7113/23-
41080

Concepcion Gonzalez Rodriguez
Josefina Garcia Aranburu
Teresa de Jesus
Gonzalez Rodriguez
Prison Soto Del Real
Apartado 200
28791 - Soto Del Real - Madrid

Alfonso Gonzalez Cambeiro
Manuel Carmona Tejedor
Prison De Topas
37799 Salamanca



Former INLA POW Tony O'Hara Looks Back On The H-Block Struggles

March 1999 saw another anniversary of the beginning of the H-Block hunger strike in which 10 men died. Tony O'Hara, IRSP Ard Comhairle member, looks back on personal memories of the causes of the prison protest.

The British government passed legislation in 1975 doing away with Special Category status (political status) that was to come into effect on March 1, 1976. This was to coincide with a major policy initiative for the six county statelet called "Ulsterisation". The main facet of this policy was to say to the world the war had ended and that Britain no longer had any political prisoners.

Since 1971 all the major towns in the north looked like war zones, with city centres sealed off with highrise fencing and gates manned by security forces, personnel that searched everyone who wished to enter these "control zones". These were ripped down to give the appearance of normality ("Normalisation"), and thus further enhance the effects of "Ulsterisation".

So to the world after March 1, 1976, the conflict had ended and the ones responsible for the continued attacks on the security forces were criminals and mavericks lead by faceless godfathers. To make this world a conveyer belt of justice was set up. Arrested people would be taken to interrogation centres, tortured into confession, then tried before a non-jury court (Diplock court) with one judge presiding, and be sentenced to lengthy sentences, taken then to a new controlled prison H-Block, where the staff would inflict mental and physical torture in attempt to break the will of the prisoner and make him/her conform to the prison system.

The first prisoner to come up against this was Ciaran Nugent. He was sentenced to five years in October 1976 and was taken to the H-Blocks where he was asked to wear a prison uniform, where his famous retort was uttered "I wouldn't wear it if you even nailed it to my back." So began the "Blanket Protest".

I was sentenced to five years in May 1977 and transferred to the H-Block 4, where in the reception I was told to strip naked and then given a uniform to wear. I refused and was dragged down onto a wing and thrown into a cell. The next day, the governor came around and tried me (kangaroo court) and sentenced me to three days solitary confinement. I was to learn that the only difference between this and the normal life on the blanket was the removal of the matress for three days, as we existed in solitary confinement for 24 hours a day, being refused access to reading materials, radios, TV, writing materials, and exercise. We were allowed to receive only one letter per week. I managed to get a total of three letters during the four years, four months of the protest, despite having letters and cards sent weekly from family and friends. We were allowed only a half hour visit per month, that was later ex-

tended to weekly. All this was to foster a climate of isolation and deprivation from the outside world.

I pointed out to the screws that I was entitled to exercise one hour per day. They told me I could have all the exercise I wanted if I wore the prison garb, so I was being punished doubly for refusing to be criminalised. For the next few years, until 1979, we lived in the monotony of cellular confinement naked except for a blanket or towel worn around the waist. My first visit was with Miriam Daly, Chairperson, IRSP Ard Comhairle. She was shocked at my condition, ashen-faced, gaunt, with a hypernervousness due to me being outside a cell door for the first time in 8 months. This led to the beginning of her organising prisoners' relatives into forming the "Relatives Action Committee" (RAC). At that stage, the only ones interested in helping the prisoners were the relatives and the IRSP. Sinn Fein ignored it until a meeting in Dublin drew a crowd of over 5000 and they jumped on the platform (Miriam Daly told me this).

My next visit was even more of a shock with my brother Patsy, he didn't recognise me and walked passed me until I called him. By then I had long hair and a bushy beard and bulging bloodshot eyes.

Five demands were drawn up that would end the protest:

1. The Right not to wear a prison uniform.
2. The Right not to do prison work.
3. The Right of free association with other prisoners.
4. The Right to organize their own educational and recreational facilities.
5. The Right to one visit, one letter and one parcel per week.

John Nixon came on the blanket in 1977 and we formed a staff for the Republican Socialist POWs on the protest. Up until then we were facing abuse and intimidation from some members of the IRA's POWs and treated as second class citizens, something that was to last the whole duration of the protest. With our staff in place we established contact with the IRSP outside on a weekly basis, and held discussions amongst ourselves at mass as to how to approach the strategy on the protest. We decided to follow everything the IRA did so as not to cause more bad feeling and due to the fact that we were small in numbers and had difficulty maintaining more than weekly contact.

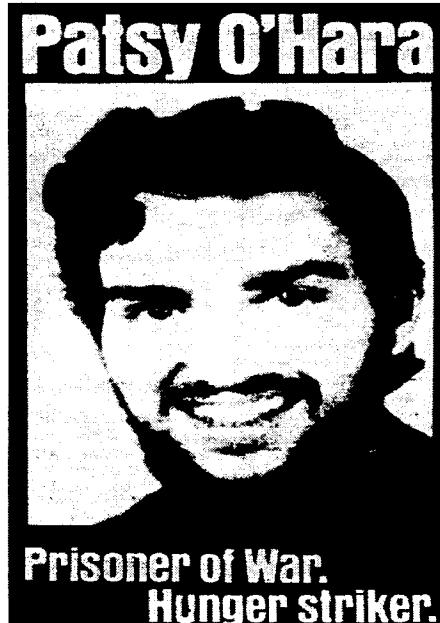
We decided from day one that it would take a hunger strike to end this nightmare and had set up the structures in motion for such a protest, but agreed to give it a few years to see how things developed. As the protest escalated and more and more sentenced prisoners joined we established a chain of communication by smuggling letters out on visits. Most of these went to the Belfast office where they were typed up and filed into the particular POW's folder.

In 1978 we upped the ante by refusing to slop out or wash. This was due to the fact that men got badly beaten everytime they left their cells. So by refusing the above, we would be making working conditions unbearable for the screws and make them reluctant to enter cells to carry out the systematic beatings. We smashed the furniture and windows to signal the beginning of the new form of protest. The prison regime reacted with its usual brutality, beating everyone badly that day!

The windows were to become a mini battleground over the next three years. Perspex replaced glass, being unbreakable. After a few months we burned them out. They then built screens around the window openings, the bottom of which was uncovered allowing the elements to determine the cells temperature. The heating pipes were turned on full in the summer and switched off in the winter. I remember waking up on New Year's Eve 1980 with my top blanket covered in frost and stiff as a board! Needless to say, we managed to burn the screens also by making wicks from towel threads and margarine.

The NIO and the Thatcher government did its best to keep the situation quiet so as not to ruffle the flow of the Criminalisation policy. But, as the numbers in the RAC increased so did the protests. Two events occurred that would bring the plight of the blanket protest to world attention. Frank Maguire MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone was allowed to enter the blocks to visit his constituents. The stench was so overwhelming that he was sick a few times but managed to get around. Three days later he issued a statement about what he saw.

A few months later, Cardinal Tomas



O'Flaherty entered on a similar visit and compared the conditions in the H Blocks to the 'sewers of Calcutta.' The word was finally out, and the press fell over themselves to interview relatives and the political representatives of the POWs.

In 1980 a press corps was allowed to enter the prison and film the conditions, as we geared up for the first hunger strike. As the attention increased, so did the attacks on, and killings of, leading H-Block/Armagh personnel on the outside. Miriam Daly who was then Chairperson of the H-Block/Armagh Committee was shot dead in 1979. Ronnie Bunting and Noel Little were soon to follow. Bernadette McAliskey was lucky to survive a January 1980 attack, despite British soldiers lying in wait outside her door. The Nationalist community was in no doubt that these attacks were sanctioned by the Thatcher government.

The hunger strike began on October 27, 1980 with seven men beginning the fast. Each man represented a county in the 6 occupied counties and Sean McKenna represented the rest of Ireland. The statement starting the hunger strike was:

"WE, the Republican Prisoners of War in the H-Blocks, Long Kesh, demand, as of right, political recognition and that we be accorded the status of political prisoners. We claim this right as captured combatants in the continuing struggle for national liberation and self-determination.

We refute most strongly the tag of 'criminal' with which the British have attempted to label us and our struggle, and we point to the divisive partitionist institutions of the six counties as the sole criminal aspect of the current struggle.

We declare that political status is ours by right and we declare that from Monday, October 27, 1980 a hunger strike by a number of men representing H-Blocks 3, 4 and 5 will commence."

The statement should have read Republican and Republican Socialists POWs. No explanation was given as to why the latter was left out. Four weeks later 28 more men and three women from Armagh jail joined the fast in an attempt to increase the momentum for the final push as the health of the first seven deteriorated. As the Thatcher government negotiated behind the scenes she issued a hardline statement: "There is no such thing as political murder, political bombing or political violence. There is only criminal murder, criminal bombing and criminal violence. We will not compromise on this. There will be no political status."

As the hunger strike entered its 53rd day Sean McKenna had fallen into a coma. The British government offered a 28 page document that seemed to grant us the most of the demands we sought. On December 18th, the protest was called off in good faith. The no wash - no slop out protest ended also, and we waited to have our own clothes delivered. During this period, Bobby Sands had freedom to travel around the blocks meeting various IRA OC's and Patsy O'Hara, INLA OC. Patsy had tried to

have access to consult with the INLA POWs but was refused. We felt we were being pushed into a corner and ignored as unimportant despite having John Nixon representing our movement in the first group of seven and five others among the 28 that later joined.

Bobby came into meet Patsy to tell him that the hunger strike was called off. A major row occurred over the IRA leadership having no authority to call off the INLA hunger strikers. The document was read and Bobby explained that it meant we had won 95% of the demands. Patsy was not impressed and seen nothing in the pages but clever word playing that was so ambiguous as to mean anything. He stated that if this fell through, "the INLA would hunger strike on its own", but was prepared to wait and give the agreement a chance.

As the British stalled and then reneged on the agreement, we prepared for another hunger strike with the INLA going alone. Ten days after the meeting, Bobby returned and threatened that if the INLA went alone, "they would be alone forever more in the prison". This didn't change anything and suddenly a week later Bobby told Patsy of the IRA's intention to join a

second hunger strike. This time we were to have one representative for every three IRA men. An agreement was made to stagger the hunger strike.

Patsy was to join the fast the third week, and the Provos put Raymond McCreesh on the same day without our knowledge so as to minimise the effects of the first INLA hunger striker joining the fast. The reasoning behind it was, "in case, O'Hara doesn't go through with it!" Even then we were still second class POWs.

We knew that this time men would probably have to die or face serious risk to their health. The Brits would push this to the brink, and plans were made for a second string to join the fast in the event of a prisoner dying, so that there would be always four POWs on fast. This time around the women in Armagh were asked not to join the protest as it was thought that the focus would be taken away from the blocks. The next five months were to be the most heart-breaking and intense in Ireland since the executions following the 1916 rising.

(Source: Irish Republican Socialist Party <<http://irsm.org/>>)

IRSP: Teach Na Failte Project

Teach na Failte <House of Welcome> is an undertaking by the Irish Republican Socialist Party to assist in reintegrating former prisoners of war back into their community, their class, and active political life. Formed by ex-prisoners for ex-prisoners, Teach na Failte is an important step forward in meeting the needs of Republican Socialist POWs under present circumstances. Below is a report on the progress of the project. Contributions in North America for Teach na Failte can be sent in care of the IRSCNA, 2057 15th Street, Suite B, San Francisco, CA 94114 USA. Please make checks to "Teach na Failte."

Project Officers Report For Teach na Failte

Strabane Teach Na Failte Office Established

Funding was acquired from the Strabane District Partnership Board, SDPB, for the rent of an office and to fully equip it. This office will now be used as the head office for Teach na Failte in the 32 Counties.

Initially there were a number of problems getting the office up and running. This was mainly due to office equipment, stationary, connecting phone lines etc., arriving much later than expected. The office has been fully equipped and functioning properly since the November 29, 1999.

The establishment of the Teach na Failte office has clearly demonstrated, even at this point the Project is gaining momentum and has instilled a greater confidence within the catchment area, not only in Strabane but further afield, in Belfast, Derry and Dublin, that the objectives of Teach na Failte, as outlined in the Development Plan is achievable.

Even though the local management committee has been functioning for quite some time they were very much hampered by the lack of a proper focal point and the availability of proper equipment which led to the lowering of moral. However since the establishment of the office there has been a significant increase in interest in the Project and morale amongst the local committee has been subsequently boosted. Usage of the office will be monitored by use of a visitors book with the relevant data included in reports.

Marketing Of The Project

There are thirty two ex-INLA prisoners in the Strabane area and all have been informed of the Project through visits from the Project officer and local chairperson Eddie McG as well as some members of the management committee. These visits were also expanded outside of ex-prisoners and included many connecting family members. During December 1999 and January 2000 a number of information sessions took place in the local office and were well attended. All received information packs about the Project and how it developed. It is intended to have these information sessions on a regular basis with minutes taken and all informed of developments as they happen.

This has led to increased support for the Project by those participating to date with offers of services on a voluntary basis. It is expected that participation within the catchment area will increase as the Project develops and concerns have been replaced with optimism.

A number of journalists, Belfast Telegraph, Derry Journal and the Strabane Chronicle, have been contacted and all have promised to do interviews with Teach na Failte about the Project.

Establishing Links With Other Groups

Since Teach na Failte was established links have been formed with a number of groups in the statutory and voluntary sector, including the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Irish Prisons Department and the Northern Ireland Office. Recently Teach na Failte has also become affiliated to the Organisation of the Unemployed Northern Ireland, OUNI, and to the North West Community Network.

Teach na Failte has also been in contact with the lead partner in the Strabane District New Deal Consortium and requested to become a member of the Consortium, which is still under consideration.

Links with a number of other prisoner groups such as Ex-PAC in Monaghan, Cairde in Strabane, Tar Isteach in Belfast and the loyalist group EPIC have also been established. A meeting did take place with a representative from EPIC and representatives from Teach na Failte to explore establishing either formal or informal links with each other. The management committee of Teach na Failte are in favour of such links with loyalist ex-prisoner groups, or any other group which will further the aims and objectives of Teach na Failte, and informal links will be maintained and hopefully expanded on as time goes by.

Links have also been established with TEA, DHSS, HE, NIACRO and the Unemployed Centre. Formal links have also been established with a number of community groups in the Strabane area. One of the advantages of those who have experienced long-term imprisonment is the fact that it has a tendency to raise the "street credibility" of the ex-prisoner within the community particularly amongst the youth. This fact has already been used to the advantage of community groups in the Strabane area in settling disputes within the community and even between the communities as already experienced in the Carlton Drive area of Strabane during the yearly Drumcree crisis.

Teach na Failte are considering setting up a formal mediation service to work on disputes within and between the communities because of the successes of the past.

Creating A Database Of Ex-INLA Prisoners

There is an estimated 500 ex-INLA prisoners. The creation of a database of ex-INLA

prisoners is well underway. A great deal of travelling and interviews with ex-prisoners throughout the 32 Counties was and is still necessary in order to compile the proper information and create a comprehensive database. This work is still ongoing.

Creating A 32 County Teach Na Failte Infrastructure

Again lack of funding has been the major problem in creating a 32 County infrastructure particularly in the 26 Counties. However, after a number of meetings between Paddy Logue, the Cross Border Project Officer for Peace and Reconciliation, and Teach na Failte, and after discussions with Martin O Fanim, Irish Foreign Affairs, an application for funding to progress the Project in the 26 Counties was successful.

This recent funding acquired from ADM/CPA will enable Teach na Failte to build a proper infrastructure in the 26 Counties, which has been very poor to date. A lot of work has yet to be done in this catchment area. A number of meetings took place in the Strabane offices during late November and December 1999 with representatives from Belfast, Derry and Dublin Teach na Failte with the sole purpose of consolidating and expanding the infrastructure already in place.

The infrastructure already in place in the North of Ireland is in a much more healthier position than that which exists in the South of Ireland. This is due to funding already being acquired in the North which has enabled the Project to progress at a much faster rate. However, with funding now recently acquired through ADM/CPA it is expected that the Project will develop much more rapidly in the South. Organising Residential and Capacity Building Training Courses

Four residential has been organised through a Technical Development Facilitator, for January, March, April and May 2000. The format of these residential are: January - communication and presentation skills, fund-raising, sustainability and new political structures. March - positive public image, listening and communication skills and conflict management. April - women's health and empowerment and presentation skills. May - project management and evaluation. A report on "Way Forward" will be launched by Brid R. on May 30, 2000 after the conclusion of the above residential.

Training providers have been contacted in relation to providing training courses. We are still waiting for the detailed programmes from them. These training programmes are to be



Patsy O'Hara's Funeral Procession

given to the Derry District Partnership Board by the end of January 2000.

Work Involving Serving Prisoners

During November and December 1999 Teach na Failte was in contact with the Sentence Review Commission, Northern Ireland Office and the Irish Prisons Department in relation to problems concerning serving INLA prisoners. Three INLA prisoners in the North were excluded from the Xmas parole scheme and this was brought to the attention of Jackie Johnston, NIO, at a meeting in Belfast. Even though it was a political decision to free all prisoners from Long Kesh over the Xmas period it is believed that the representations made by Teach na Failte secured the release of those prisoners mentioned. Teach na Failte was also involved in negotiations with the NIO and INLA prisoners on operational matters within Long Kesh with a satisfactory outcome.

Teach na Failte have also been in contact with the SRC on behalf of the families of serving prisoners with satisfactory outcomes in all cases.

There has been regular contact with the Irish Prison Department on behalf of both prisoners and their families with mixed results. All INLA prisoners in both Long Kesh and Portlaoise have been fully informed of the Project since its inception and are regularly informed of all developments. They have been taking part in courses within the prisons such as Welfare Rights, computer training courses etc. with a view of using these skills to progress the Project after release.

During the period of December 1999 Teach na Failte assisted representatives of the POW department in Belfast, Derry, Strabane, Dublin and Dundalk in raising funds for the families of serving INLA prisoners. 100 pounds a piece was given to 22 families for Xmas.



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A Brief Introduction To The Communist Prisoners Collective "Wotta Sitta"

The Collectivo Comunisti Prigionieri Wotta Sitta (Wotta Sitta Communist Prisoners Collective) consists of comrades imprisoned in various special prisons coming from the different Italian guerrilla experiences (Red Brigades, NAP - Armed Proletarian Units, Red Brigades-Guerrilla Party, COLP - Communists Organized for Proletarian Liberation, Resistance).

As prisoners (we are all in jail for about 10 years, and some of us for 15) we have a wide knowledge of struggle inside the maximum security prisons, in unity with the struggles of the social prisoners.

It is important - instead of speaking about our specific experiences - to talk about our common heritage, that is, the similar characteristics typical of the whole revolutionary movement in Western Europe at the end of the 60's, which are the background for the birth of the guerrilla in Europe as well as in Italy.

In the early 70's the guerrilla developed in order to re-build a revolutionary perspective - a class perspective - of the proletariat, in order to re-open a power confrontation in the heart of the imperialist system. Particularly in Italy, the guerrilla has built a fighting experience deeply rooted in the class and social structure and in the struggles of all the proletarian sectors; a fighting praxis which has developed in direct opposition and attack against the state.

At the beginning of the 80's everybody (therefore us as well) understood the coming into being of a change affecting the entire international reality and the rise of a new movement re-designing the revolutionary perspective. In Europe this meant the beginning of the building up of a revolutionary anti-imperialist Front, through the initiative of the RAF and AD, and BR-PCC, and involving most of the European resistance.

So during the summer of 1985, when we worked out our first collective paper as prisoners - entitled "Wotta Sitta" - that is in African "the time is right" - we started from the deep conscience that it was time to start building a wider communication process among the revolutionary experiences and the anti-imperialist movements existing all over the world, in particular in Western Europe. It was time to really overcome the ideological attitudes towards internationalism in order to focus on the common class interests that bind together the proletarians of the world in the common struggle against the "new imperialist order".

But our objective, since the beginning, has also been to give a political answer to the coun-

ter-revolutionary strategy which gained ground after the defeats and arrests suffered by the guerrilla organizations in 1982, particularly in Italy.

The capitalist governments tried to put an end to the struggle and resistance of the revolutionary prisoners in Europe in order to transform their struggle into a weapon to point at the communist perspective and the anti-imperialist fight, and to play against the fighting organizations.

Our intention is to confront the integrated counter-revolution with the political and fighting unity of the revolutionary prisoners inside the wider unity of the revolutionary movement.

The counter-revolutionary strategy against the prisoners is a common reality of all the European states, therefore also the struggle of the revolutionary prisoners and the solidarity movements must move forward and develop a common and unified reality. They are not a different thing apart from the internationalist solidarity.

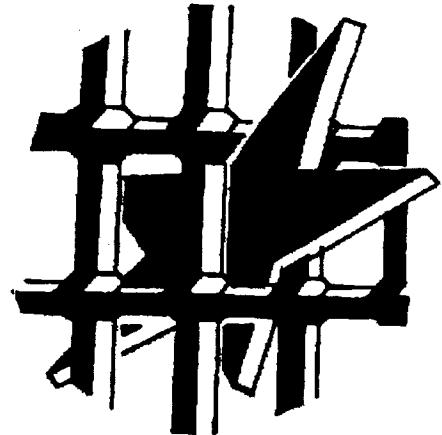
In this sense, the experience of struggle carried out by the imprisoned comrades of the RAF and resistance in the FRG has been very important, as well as the struggle of the imprisoned comrades of PCE(r) and GRAPO in Spain.

We would like to say also that inside the Italian prisons there are some Arab and Palestinian prisoners and in the last few years we have made many solidarity initiatives with them against their segregation.

Regarding our jail's conditions we have to say that, together with all the other Italian political prisoners (about 150), we are spread out in different special jails: Novara, Cuneo, Marino del Tronto, Carinola, Rome-Rebibbia for men and Opera-Milano for women.

They are all maximum security prisons with control units for political prisoners, established with decree by the Italian government in 1977 in the framework of the "struggle against terrorism" for a number of prisoners reaching 800 persons in the early 80's. Some comrades (a few in fact) as well as some Arab/Palestinian prisoners are in general population jails.

The State's policy is based on continuous pressure through the adaptable use of segregation and dispersion, through the strict control of visits and mail directly by the intelligence forces by means of the prison department, through the investigations into the political debate inside prisons, the periodic criminalization campaign against the revolutionary prisoners, and the prosecutions against the solidarity movement and people supporting the prison-



ers and sometimes also against the relatives (with charges similar to 129a in the FRG).

In Italy every activity of the revolutionary prisoners not controlled by the state's pacification policy is considered "a threat against state security", because for quite a while the bourgeoisie has tried to enforce a political solution to armed struggle with the active collaboration of many ex-revolutionary people, once militants in the various fighting organizations, in order to recompose the break between the state and the class movement of the last ten years and to depoliticize the whole experience of armed struggle.

In this state counter-revolutionary strategy, the reformist and revisionist parties are very active, above all the PCI, which with its recent transformation into the PDS (Democratic Party of the Left) has fulfilled its move towards the bourgeois area which it began in the post World War Two era, and has reinforced its role as enemy of any revolutionary initiative in this country.

In conclusion the State policy on the revolutionary prisoners - in Italy as well as in any west European country - aims at redefining the contradiction represented by the existence of guerrilla prisoners in view of the European process of economic-political-military integration, of which the "1992 united market" is a very significant step. We see in every European country many direct attacks against the prisoners and the attempt to use them against the guerrilla, as is now happening with the arrests of the ex-RAF militants in the DDR.

As imprisoned revolutionaries we have to confront the same counter-revolutionary strategy of imperialism in every European country and aware of being an integral part of the revolutionary process here, we see in the unity of the prisoners in western Europe a possible and necessary step in our fighting experience.

Collectivo Comunisti
Prigionieri Wotta Sitta

(Written in 1992.)

BRIGATE ROSENSE



"For The Liberation From Oppression And Capitalist Exploitation!"

A Letter From The Comrades Of The Italian Communist Political Prisoners Collective 'Wotta Sitta'

Dear comrades,

As revolutionary communist prisoners, we send greetings to the struggle of the "Committee for the End of Administrative Detention" in Ramallah, Palestine. Administrative detention is a weapon of repression utilized by the Zionist military. It means arresting and detaining militants of the Palestinian resistance movement, without evidence or a trial; the duration of this "administrative detention" can last anywhere from six months to an undetermined length of time.

This "administrative detention", together with the "massive physical pressure" (in other words, torture) declared constitutional by the Israeli Supreme Court, are not only expressions of the cruelty of Zionism, they also represent the interests of imperialism in this region and the treason by complicity of Mr. Arafat's Palestinian Authority. (It is no coincidence that the thousands in administrative detention consist almost entirely of activists opposed to the Oslo Accords.)

These tools of repression are a further development of the Zionist counter-revolutionary strategy, adapted to the actual phase of the conflict, which is characterized in Palestine by a radical critique and struggle by the masses against the Oslo Accords, which have only institutionalized the repression against and made more unbearable the living conditions of the proletariat and the Palestinian people.

These "Oslo Accords" - a product of the imperialist Gulf War - were presented as a necessary pacification of the Palestinians, accompanied by a massive media campaign directed by the imperialists. In reality, for the proletariat and the Palestinian resistance they mean "administrative detention"; the legalization of torture; the existence of a further 5,000 political prisoners (a figure recognized even by Israel), who are denied the most fundamental rights in the prison camps and Zionist jails; the planning and construction of Zionist settlements, together with the plans for military control over the territory of the Palestinian Authority.

All of this is taking place at a time when Israel is carrying out dangerous manoeuvres together with the army of the fascist Turkish state; the counter-revolutionary triangle of the USA-Israel-Turkey against all anti-imperialist processes of struggle is being anchored in this region, accompanied with open threats of using atomic weapons in the event of a conflict with neighboring peoples. The increasing and continuing adaptation of counter-revolutionary instruments of repression in Palestine as in other part of the world illustrate the deepening of the class war between the international proletariat and the imperialist bourgeoisie.

The material base of this process, of course, does not lie in the extraordinary cruelty of this or other forms of repression and exploitation. Rather it is the depth and dimension of the crisis of capitalist production, which is structurally reducing the areas for movements everywhere. In the present phase of neo-liberal-

ism, every region of the earth is of "vital interest" for the various imperialist fractions and everywhere the revolutionary movements, proletarians, and peoples are being attacked in an attempt to weaken and divide them.

The model of preventive counter-revolution is the way in which the bourgeoisie reacts to proletarian antagonism during the crisis, in that it continually adapts its methods of attacking the revolutionary movement and class in order to prevent any revolutionary initiatives from developing. No struggle which represents the main interests of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie is allowed to express itself for any length of time. In this sense, the model is used against all expressions of political class struggle, in an effort to prevent them, no matter at what level they manifest themselves. The imperialist bourgeoisie, in its strategy of preventive counter-revolution, does not have as its main goal to struggle against "crimes", rather to break and destroy the identity of the antagonistic and revolutionary class.

Imperialism and counter-revolution. Each imperialist state must defend its monopoly on violence and negate the political value of the proletarian resistance and the revolutionary struggles. In the end they launch counter-revolutionary campaigns which make use of all available means to spread ideological poison, increase repression, and "absorb" the resistance, to thereby destroy all solidarity, all organization, all revolutionary class consciousness.

This war has a psychological element to it as well (especially after 1989, when the "end of communism" was said to mean the "end of history") by which any struggle or resistance, whether directed against the ruling powers at the national level or an international struggle, is dismissed as "terrorism" and all fractions of the imperialist bourgeoisie are lined up behind this deadly effort. It's no coincidence, therefore, that the G7 powers organized a summit (in Lyon)

on this very topic, and that the G7 plus 1 summit in Toronto gave the go ahead for the brutal murder of the comrades from the MRTA who had occupied the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima.

At the international level, preventive counter-revolution in the imperialism/revolution dialectic has reached a historical stage whereby it adapts to forms which fit the contemporary reality. Each imperialist state has its own preventive counter-revolutionary practices, which are tested during explosive moments of class struggle. It's worth taking a brief look at this:

In the USA, the bastion of international counter-revolution, the methods used against anti-imperialist movements and oppressed nationalities have always been especially brutal. From the Red scares of the 1950s to COINTELPRO to the new "Anti-Crime Bill" legislations, mass criminalization has always been the aim. The result is mandatory life prison terms for three-time repeat offenders, the expanded use of the death penalty, and a reduction in the time between the verdict and the actual execution.

In Chiapas, where the state made a public show of negotiating with the Zapatistas after their uprising, an entire region is being militarized and the army is harassing indigenous villages, at the same time "advisors" from the USA are organizing anti-insurrection and paramilitary groups comprised of collaborators, in order to destroy the mass rebellion of the indigenous peoples. These paramilitary formations, with the protection of the police, the army, and state authorities, are threatening, terrorizing, detaining, and massacring the indigenous population in an attempt to destroy their strength to fight and their unity.

In Peru, the dictator Fujimori - the "wonderchild of neo-liberalism" - abandoned his facade of legality in the face of a rising civil war and proceeded to massacre political prisoners and chose the continue on the path of



Some Wotta Sitta comrades: Lorenzo Calzone, Vittorio Bolognesi, Giovanni Gentile Schiavone, Giovanni Senzani and Luciano Farina

war which had been started on by his predecessor, the "socialist" president Garcia. Fujimori sent tanks to close down the parliament, installed military tribunals where masked judges handed down hundreds of years in prison terms, meaning hundred of comrades and proletarians were sent to prison for life without any chance of defense. Fujimori ruled by decree, and at the same time passed laws granting leniency to collaborators.

In Turkey, the fascist state has legalized terror, censorship, banning, and repression (Law No. 413) in its efforts against the Kurdish revolution and the Turkish revolutionary movement.

In the heart of "civilized Europe", the imperialist states follow an almost unified counter-revolutionary policy in opposition to the revolutionary movements and liberation movements of oppressed peoples in France, Belgium, Spain, Northern Ireland, and so on. Laws, courts, and special prisons. Torture, isolation, and the dispersion of revolutionary prisoners. "Death squads" to eliminate militants from resistance movements and revolutionary organizations.

In Germany, the state developed its attack on the antagonistic movements by means of Article 129a (which has been used against countless comrades), which gives the intelligence agency a blank check in its repression against all those who organize in opposition to the ruling system. The authorities do everything possible to destroy solidarity and the resistance.

Even in Italy, due to the deep roots of the urban guerrilla and the autonomous tendencies in the class struggle, the preventive counter-revolution of the past decades has reached such a level that it is now almost a model for others.

Italy combines the most brutal forms of repression (mass arrests, torture, special prisons, planned executions, like the Via Fracchia incident [On March 28, 1980, Carabinieri police raided a Red Brigades (BR) base on the Via Fracchia in Genoa, due to information from a BR turncoat named Patrizio Peci. Police general Dalla Chiesa wanted no prisoners. Four BR militants were murdered. They were Lorenzo Betessa (Antonio), Anna Maria Ludmann (Cecilia), Riccardo Dura (Roberto), and Piero Panciarelli (Pasquale). - ed.]) with a very refined system of "rehabilitating" people (special laws for 'Dissociati' and 'Pentiti' collaborators, as well as periodic campaigns for reduced sentences and amnesties, which are carried out by the state and its lackeys).

In Western Europe, the presence of a deeply rooted and progressive revolutionary movement and an urban guerrilla, which attacked and took apart the war and restructuring projects of the imperialists, was met with the internationalization of power relations and the development of a model of repression which has been adapted by the individual imperialist states. Also, repression became increasingly centralized into supranational organs, which consolidated the preventive counter-revolution efforts against the European metropolitan proletariat at the highest level.

In the 1970s, this process was repre-

sented by the formation of the TREVI group and the "Anti-Terrorism" Commission within NATO. In the 1980s, the TREVI expanded and the Schengen Agreement was passed (thereby institutionalizing European racism against immigrants and refugees), meaning the counter-revolutionary integration of the imperialist bourgeoisie in the hunt for "domestic" and "foreign enemies".

On the foundations of TREVI and Schengen, a European fortress is being built, equipped with the counter-revolutionary functions of controlling the population by means of a comprehensive databank, computerized identification, the redefinition of political crime, and the procedures of deportation and the abolishing the right to asylum.

The Maastricht Treaty of the 1990s has cleared the path for the formation of a joint police organization - Europol - and perfected TREVI, the network for police cooperation, as an instrument for repression in all European Union member countries.

As the class war, in which the international proletariat and the imperialist bourgeoisie stand opposed to one another, deepens, the levels of preventive counter-revolution are increased by imperialism in conjunction with this or that "serious incident" in some part of the world. The preventive counter-revolution is now a stable factor in the power struggle between the classes at the international level. Wherever it is employed, it marks out a "point of no return" and is continually adapted.

Therefore, there can be no greater mistake than to think that the various "serious incidents" which have characterized the political-repressive counter-revolution in Italy or elsewhere for years now were facts in and of themselves. And nothing is more disarming for the proletariat than the series of litanies about "the end of the cycle" or "the time for pause and historical reflection" or "emergency exits" or "the good old days". And bastards of worst kind are trying to tear apart the legacies of the struggles and revolutionary experiences, which grew from the fires of the clashes between the class and the ruling powers.

Making the freedom of the revolutionary prisoners a part of that process is nothing more than a counter-revolutionary operation.

The liberation of the revolutionary prisoners is closely tied to the struggle against the strategy of preventive counter-revolution, that's why it is and will always be an unnegelectable goal for the international proletariat. But at the same time, this must not be the center around which the revolutionary perspective for emancipation and liberation turns.

Every revolutionary

and every antagonistic proletarian knows that repression never ends, at all times (and in all places) it is organized and seeking to destroy current struggles, by means of denunciation, layoffs, beatings, the closure of political spaces, arrests, prison, isolation... all the way to torture, execution, and "state-assisted suicides".

That's why the struggle against repression and for the liberation of the revolutionary prisoners can be nothing else than the struggle for liberation from oppression and capitalist exploitation. And that's why it must be internationalized, to increase its strengths and capabilities, to make advances in the clash of power between revolution and imperialism.

For this reason, we send our internationalist solidarity to all the prisoners in "administrative detention" in Palestine and to all revolutionary prisoners across the world, who are fighting against isolation and physical and psychological destruction. Solidarity belongs to all revolutionary prisoners who are struggling for the defense and development of their revolutionary identity and for their liberation.

Freedom For Ahmed Qatamesh And For All Palestinian Prisoners In 'Administrative Detention'!

Freedom For Mumia Abu-Jamal And For All Revolutionary Prisoners In The World!

"Solidarity Is The Tenderness Of The Peoples" - Che

Solidarity Is A Weapon!

April 1998

- some comrades from the communist political prisoners collective "Wotta Sitta"



More Wotta Sitta comrades (clockwise): Pia Vianale (standing), Susanna Berardi, Caterina Spano, Anna Cotone and Rosa Mura



Conference For The Freedom Of Political Prisoners Around The World

A Gathering Of Losers, Or The Beginnings Of A New International Solidarity?

More than 300 people took part in the recent conference "Pacification, Or Liberation? Perspectives For International Solidarity For The Freedom Of Political Prisoners" during the Easter holiday in Berlin. Although at least half of the people attending were from Germany, people from some 30 other countries also attended, from South Africa to Sweden, from Chile to Palestine. 50 different organizations were represented: human rights groups; relatives of political prisoners in Chile, Mexico, Kurdistan, Euskadi, Germany, and Peru; political prisoner support groups from northern Ireland, Palestine, and South Africa; the lawyers for political prisoners in Italy, Chile, Turkey and Kurdistan, the USA, Cameroon, Denmark, and Catalonia; and political organizations, for example the FARC guerrilla movement from Colombia and the Basque organization Herri Batasuna. The central demand of all these individuals and organizations is freedom for political prisoners.

The conference featured six working groups which held three days of intensive discussion, and not a few arguments. The themes of the working groups were: "Political Justice And Defense", "Arrested, Taken Away, 'Disappeared'", "Women And Prison", "Human Dignity, Resistance, And Organizing In Captivity", "State

Repression And Resistance From Below", and "The Struggle For Solidarity". Plenary discussions and two open events rounded out the conference program.

Despite the intentions of the International Preparatory Committee (Euskadi, Italy, Palestine, Kurdistan, and Germany), most of the working groups were put together by German members of the organizing committee. That led to some claims of Euro-centrism on the part of the organizers. Although not entirely untrue, this accusation was sometimes voiced too quickly. But the atmosphere in the sessions was characterized by the desire to exchange experiences, build links, and learn about the conditions of struggle and prison conditions in various other countries. This was no easy task, given that at least 7 different languages were being spoken at the conference.

"The Identity Of The Political Prisoners Must Be Defended!"

In countries like Euskadi, Palestine, or Turkey and Kurdistan, where there is a high percentage of political prisoners with respect to the total population (Palestine: 2,500; Euskadi: 500; Turkey: more than 10,000), it is natural that solidarity with political prisoners is carried

out by a broad spectrum of both organized and unorganized segments of the population. In countries like France, the USA, or Germany, however, there is almost no solidarity with the political prisoners. When attempting to answer why that is, the discussions also touched on the subject of what should happen with the political prisoners once their organizations have disbanded (like with the RAF prisoners in Germany, for example). In other cases (Colombia, northern Ireland, and Palestine), organizations have started peace talks or already signed peace agreements, although the prisoners have received little benefits, or they can only benefit if they state their full acceptance of the peace agreements. There was another situation in South Africa, where political prisoners were freed under an amnesty, but then received almost no support. In Chile, where political prisoners were freed to some degree following the "democratic change" in 1990, there are still political prisoners being held, imprisoned together with the "new" political prisoners captured since 1990.

Without justice, freedom from oppression and exploitation, and the right to self-determined development, there can be no freedom for po-
continued on the next page...

Statement From The International Meeting For Political Prisoners

Bearing in mind the unjust and difficult situation which political prisoners around the world face, the violation of their most basic rights, because they are the victims of absurd verdicts which in no way correspond to the simplest principles of law, and in some cases they are sentenced by faceless judges, as in Peru:

We, members of humanitarian organizations who are committed to defending human rights, gathered in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from September 12-14, 1998 to exchange information and experiences and to debate alternatives, and to come together in the struggle on behalf of political prisoners.

Bearing in mind our common reality, we came to the conclusion that the politics of neo-liberalism suppress with prison terms - or death - all forms of action which are aimed against the plans for hunger and misery for the peoples of this world.

In the face of this, we strengthened our resolve to resist this injustice and we arrived at the following proposals:

1. In cases of emergencies regarding political prisoners, we must remain in the highest phase of alertness ("Red Alarm").
2. We must address situation of specific cases,

such as people suffering with serious and in many cases fatal illnesses who are imprisoned, as in Chile, Peru, Puerto Rico, and Spain.

3. To organize a delegation consisting of international organizations to visit Peru to check on the situation of the 7,000 political prisoners there.
4. To create an organizational effort by which lawyers from our organizations are able to initiate work by means of international law.
5. To mobilize support for and participation in the International Meeting on Political Prisoners, which will be held in Berlin, Germany in April 1999.
6. Coordination and information.
7. A set day each week is to be set aside for lasting communication. By means of an Internet website, it will be possible to reach the whole world.
8. We have agreed upon December 10th as the "International Day of Struggle for the Freedom of Political Prisoners".

Freedom For All Political Prisoners!

Dolores Lopaz und Veronica Brito Castro, ODEP - Organización de Defensa Popular (Chile) - Mikel Korta, Gestoras Pro Amnistía (Pais Vasco - Espana) - Gabrielle Hanka, Initiative Libertad (Alemania) - Teofilo Aparicuba, Casa Andina de Solidaridad (Peru) - Dres. Aurea Rodriguez und Luis Nieves Falcon, Comité Pro Derechos Humanos de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico) - Breno Altman, María Rodriguez de Assis Azevedo und Estala Aranha, Comité por la Liberación de los Presos Políticos Internacionlistas (Brasil), Daniel Azevedo und Gabriel Noronha Araujo, Conselho Estadual de Defesa Dos Direitos da Pessoa Humana (Brasil) - Gustavo Garcia, AFFAP (Estado Espanol) - Lilia Diaz Herrera, Rep. de las Prisoneras de Chile (Chile) - Nenina Bouillet und Nelida Rodriguez, Comisión Argentina por la Libertad de los Presos Políticos (Argentina) - Carlos Zamorano, Graciela Remblun, Hector Trajemberg, Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre (Argentina) - Maria Baraldo und Carlos Orzaocoa, Comisión Libertad a los Presos Políticos - Cordoba (Argentina).

Pacification Or Liberation? - International Solidarity And Freedom For All Political Prisoners Worldwide

International Conference: "Freedom For All Political Prisoners Worldwide!"

April 1-5, 1999 in Berlin, Germany

Perspectives Of International Solidarity

How many trade-unionists will be left on garbage dumps today with a bullet in their heads? Which country has punished those, who tortured with electrodes and other means thousands of members of the opposition? How many journalists have "disappeared"? Is there a place where people, who fight for freedom and justice, don't get denounced and jailed as "terrorists"? How many political prisoners are imprisoned today - in the "year of human rights"? And the international community, what will they know about them, what would they care to know?

Fifty years after the passing of the General Declaration of Human Rights, talking of human rights has become a general issue. Not so the human rights themselves. Three quarters of humankind suffer expropriation every day and societal wealth becomes the property of a few. Definition and enforcement of the human rights are a question of power. The point that really matters is: Who does what. Bashing in heads of political prisoners in Turkey serves as "counterinsurgency", the possible live coverage of executions on U.S. television as "crime prevention", the massacres of landless Brazilians as "property protection", the officially sanctioned right to torture in Israel serves as support for the "peace process". And the Geneva Convention for Refugees gives less protection than ever before.

We are human rights organizations, solidarity committees and revolutionary groups from Palestine, Kurdistan/Turkey, Italy, Euskadi and

Germany. In our countries torture is practiced. People have "disappeared" and there is an ongoing "dirty war". There is torture through isolation and high security prisons. There exists a special political justice system and manifold concepts of so-called "preventive counter-insurgency". In our countries we have altogether almost 20,000 political prisoners - worldwide there must be up to a 100,000.

During the last 15 years, unleashed global capitalism has spread its power even to the last corner of the world. Its power and economy are defined as "the best system of the world". Allegedly, it is supposed to bring peace, freedom and prosperity. But for the majority of the world's population it means only poverty and oppression.

If Palestine is mentioned nowadays, there is no talk about occupation but about peace. But what kind of a peace is this, if there are 3000 political prisoners? What kind of a democracy is this, if killers like Pinochet hold lifelong posts and honours while those who stood up resolutely against the guns of a dictatorship are still incarcerated? The trade-unionist opposition in Indonesia and the freedom-fighters in East Timor have still not been set free as a result of the abdication of Suharto. Why?

Pacification or liberation? We say: There will be no peace without justice! And peace means more than the mere absence of war. The abolition of the death penalty, an end to the torture and the dirty war, freedom for all political prisoners, punishment for the torturers and

and to coordinate practical support for the freedom of political prisoners around the world.

"Here sit representatives of the forgotten liberation struggles from the entire world," said one conference participant. One cannot deny that there have been defeats, massive repression, torture and repression, expulsions, and continuing exploitation. And yet, this conference did exhibit conduct as described in one letter from a prisoner in Chile: "Tell the comrades at the conference of the international solidarity movement that the people in the prisons, in the villages and cities, in the fields of the South, carry with them the hope of being on a path to a humane future." Is that revolutionary romanticism, a vain cry in the wilderness? Or isn't it rather a breath of fresh air, which gives power to our cold and choking hearts?

Karin Leukefeld

(Published in 'Kurdistan Report' #95 - Summer 1999; Translated by Arm The Spirit)

murderers - our objectives are justified and they're not realized yet. If we agree on this, there is only one conclusion: The reasons for the struggle have not become less but even more. We don't tell anybody how to fight but we say: Human rights will not be given to us, we have to fight to get them.

We are united by experience: On our own we are not strong enough to achieve real changes and to free the political prisoners. We know the courageous example of the Peruvian MRTA guerrilla. They risked their lives for the freedom of the prisoners - and they lost it because they stood alone, alone against the terrorism of Fujimori and the support for him from the international community of states. But we also know the power of international solidarity. It was strong enough to get through to the death chambers of the world power USA and save the Black revolutionary and journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal from the white executioners up to now.

Solidarity committees and associations of relatives, grassroots and liberation movements, revolutionary organizations and oppositional groups, human rights and lawyer associations! International cooperation, support, help and solidarity is the prerequisite for the freedom and the protection of political prisoners. Until now, our cooperation has often been coincidental and sporadic, and rarely coordinated. This weakens us and makes our opponents strong. An international struggle requires discussion. We want to start with this in Berlin. Let's bring together our analysis, experiences and perspectives.

Freedom For All Political Prisoners Worldwide!

The International Organization Committee: ADDAMEER (Palestine), Gestoras Pro Amnistia (Euskadi), Coordinamento Mumia Abu-Jamal (Italy), IHD - Human Rights Association (Turkey/Kurdistan), Libertad-Organizing Committee (Germany)

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Interview With Ahmed Qatamesh

Definition of Administrative Detention: the zionist practice of locking up a Palestinian for an indefinitely renewable six months period without formally charging them with anything in court.

Introduction

Ahmed Sulayman Musa Qatamesh has earned himself a reputation as one of Palestine's foremost political activists and prisoners of conscience. A writer by vocation and a revolutionary by nature, Qatamesh's involvement with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) prompted his Zionist interrogators to proclaim victoriously upon his capture in 1992: "there is George Habash on the outside and Ahmed Qatamesh on the inside"!

After 17 years in hiding, Qatamesh was to spend nearly six years in prison without trial as the Zionists' longest-held administrative detainee. His plight epitomizes that of all administrative detainees, while his charm, intellect, and optimism color a thorough interview that the Free Arab Voice had the opportunity of conducting with him.

As is frequently the case with depositaries of the Palestinian experience like Ahmad Qatamesh, the interview turned out rather longer than our average FAV issue. However, we trust that the valuable insights Qatamesh provides on the state of the Palestinian psyche, the historical impact and context of Oslo, the status of the PFLP, and his role as an agent in his own destiny will make for some very good reading. Still, the longer unedited version of the interview is available upon request.

[This interview with Ahmad Qatamesh was conducted for the Free Arab Voice (FAV) by Fadia Issam Rafide].

Even though you have lived in Palestine your whole life, one could conclude that your imprisonment in the early '70s followed by 17 years of life underground and another 6 years in administrative detention means that you have been 'removed' from the Palestinian community at large for almost three decades. Upon your release, what environment did you find yourself in? How do you think our "shaab" (Palestinian people) have changed?

Though I was not directly a part of the mainstream, I was not away from the political scene because I was working underground and engaging in political activities. Madrid-Oslo happened and their impacts were drastic on the whole society. They cannot be reduced to the fact that the Palestinian Authority is in 'charge' of 4% of the West Bank and Gaza. Our people were psychologically affected. Before Oslo, the Palestinian people used to have an agenda and a common slogan of liberation; now we have no agenda and no slogan. They have gone on different paths. The Palestinian people

in Jordan became a part of Jordan. Their agenda is now a Jordanian one. In Lebanon, the Palestinians are on their own. There is nothing to unite them.

Our shaab is dispersed now and they have been swallowed up in the environments of their Diaspora. Every segment started thinking on its own and this led to isolationism, a very different environment from that which the older generation grew up in when they were united toward common goals.

Many have begun to look at the struggle completely differently than before. For example, they are now considering alternative ways that in my opinion are not very effective. In the past, we used to say the more you put pressure on the enemy, the greater your likelihood of succeeding. Now many people see negotiations as the way to bring us our rights. The phenomenon is that people are waiting to see what will come of Oslo, looking passively and thinking that the future will magically bring them something.

I have noticed that the youthful generation now pines only for recreation, happiness, luxury, fun, and entertainment. The reason for this is that there is no revolutionary atmosphere anymore as a result of Oslo. If you compare this with the atmosphere of the Intifada, you would find, as you would expect, a drastic change. Now there is no Intifada, no revolution. There is only the aftermath of Oslo.

In the 70s, people wanted to be cultured and well-read because it was important for the cause. After Oslo, they do not care for that much anymore. But without intellectual awareness, we cannot continue to manufacture revolutionaries. Only 2% of our people read the press these days and even fewer read books according to a recent poll. If our political situation were different, this 2% would be much higher. There is a direct relationship between the lack of a revolutionary environment and the lack of people's desire to be intellectual and aware. Instead, many people have just turned to religion.

In my opinion, the majority of people are searching for a revolutionary alternative. Because there is none, people are frustrated, angry, and negative about things relating to politics. The prevailing misconception is that the conflict with our enemy is over. Oslo defeated our will to struggle and to sacrifice. People used to be willing to be martyred or jailed for the sake of liberation. Now, people are questioning themselves. Why should I do this? Is it worth it? Instead, they begin to tend to their personal affairs: how to live, what to eat, what to buy, and how to find individual ways to survive. Some people are even ready to sell their conscience for money with no regard to the ideals of the previous period. They start looking for rewards whether through a ministry or as a minister's assistant. They are thinking: it is time for us to get what we deserve money-wise, fame-wise, and profit-wise. We have finished our struggle: it is time to collect some of what

we're owed.

Yet regardless of what I said, or what I did not say, the contradiction still exists between us and our enemy, between our shaab and our occupier. The larger contradiction is between us as an Arab nation - with its objectives and visions - and the zionist objectives in the area. The contradiction is still alive but the way to express it is not represented revolutionarily. Our enemy's victory does not mean the loss of our program for liberation. We did not lose our rights to continue the struggle. At the same time, this does not mean that we lost our perspective of being one Arab nation against the zionists. Even if they have won now, temporarily, that does not mean we lost strategically. At this stage, we have suffered a political failure. We are in a state of retreat. This is not catastrophic nevertheless; it is temporary. People in other struggles have gone through this: victories and retreats. As long as we have a just cause, this shaab demands its right of return even in the 1948 areas. The subjective conditions that spurred our revolution are still in place for people to use as a springboard for revolution. But they need a revolutionary mechanism to uplift them again.

I predict that in the future, the people will explode again because the conditions are still there for them to explode again. There are examples to foretell of this. One is "meseeret el-mellion" [the Palestinian million persons march] with people going down to the streets to express their dream for Palestine, including the land occupied in '48. Another is the events of digging the tunnel [beneath Al-Aqsa Mosque] creating many martyrs and inflicting many injuries on people who were willing to sacrifice. Recently we have even the police rising up in Gaza to face down the army of occupation. The capabilities of our people will never dry up. They are waiting for an incident or a spark to energize them again as well as a leadership they can trust.

On Oslo

The political strategy and philosophy of the U.S. is to manage our present crisis not to resolve it. They want to prolong it years and years to gain time so that they can change realities on the ground. Oslo did not prevent the "Israelis" from expropriating 320,000 dunams of our land after the so-called negotiations. Now they are expanding Jerusalem. Every time they expand it, they take extra land from us. Since 1967, they wanted a 'united' Jerusalem. Their project of expansion is still existent, even after Oslo. The settlements are growing 30% annually. This is despite the fact that 30,000 apartments built on the settlements are still vacant. They do not need more apartments; they just want to promote expansion. This expansion has the objective of creating a demographically lopsided area of predominantly Jews. East Jerusalem now has 170,000 Jews and 160,000 Arabs.

They want to compartmentalize our ter-



ritories so that we don't unite. The West Bank is not connected to Gaza. We need their permission to connect them but we cannot even have an economic unity without access. This is their plan. They want our regions to be isolated so their hegemony is more easily executed. They want more realities on the ground and they want to see more Palestinians full of despair and hopelessness. People are living in shock and despair.

The question is: what's next? We are still looking for a place under the sun and we are still looking for our rights. For people to continue, they need an infrastructure of leadership, solid preconditions, the freedom to fight, democracy, and the Arab factor.

Israelis will not give you these!!

In some ways, your release from administrative detention was a surprise, as arbitrary as your imprisonment. In other ways, it seems that it was your inalienable right to be released and that no 'miracle' took place that we should be in awe of. Would you comment on the factors that led to your release and, through this, mention the role of the "Israeli" left in making this possible?

Let me point out that the current administrative detainees are 90% from the Islamic movement. Leftists comprise 7-8% and 1-2% are from Fatah.

There is no change in the mentality of the Israelis toward administrative detention. They still believe in that way of practicing 'state security'. But, the people detained are smaller quantity-wise. In the event of a military attack however, I assure you that they will detain hundreds. They do that to reassure the "Israeli" people that they are on top of things and that they should have confidence in the secret service, etc.

One of the roles of administrative detention is that of a propaganda tool for the purpose of assuring the "Israelis" that their government is tough on security. The question has been asked: why did they release us (the PFLP members), particularly me? When they arrested me 6 years ago, they tried to give the impression that I was the leader of the PFLP at that time. From the beginning, they tried to exaggerate my case so that they could show off their dominance over the PFLP, allegedly because they had captured whom they thought was its most important leader in the West Bank. They claimed that I was part of the politburo of the PFLP, that they captured millions of dollars with me, etc.

In reality, they only found \$1000. At that time, they had not even captured anybody beside me. I claimed that I was only an individual that did not represent the entire organization. They wanted me to admit to much more so that the media could inflate the 'capture'. Now, after they released me, they tried to give the impression that they have struck a deal with the PFLP through me. If they proved that we are PFLP members, they would have convicted us. They did not convict us because they never proved that we were.

Protest Actions

What is so great about steadfastness under interrogation is that you do not tell them you are a member and they never prove it. This is the meaning of being steadfast during interrogation. For someone to be steadfast, s/he has to grin and bear it, sacrifice, go through hell, and endure them and survive.

We force them to deal with us as administrative detainees individually. As detainees, we had our own legal agency in the matter (of advocating for our release). The detainees confronted the military occupation with acts of protest for one year through hunger strikes, demonstrations, putting fire to the blankets on which we slept, singing slogans, writing on the walls.

Then we boycotted the appeals courts because we were not getting anywhere through them. We used to talk back to the army officers. We even refused their sacred duty of daily roll call. When they called our names to be counted, we simply did not answer back in objection. As a result, they fired tear gas on us twice. We used to breathe really hard as though we were rabbits in a research lab. There were 100 of us in our section and they threw 240 tear gas canisters at us during that period of confrontation.

So in that sense we raised our own issues. As a result, there was solidarity from some limited Palestinian institutions: Ra'i, Mandela, Al-Dammeer, and likewise. The measures we took inside made it a humanitarian issue and forced it onto the Israeli streets. Four hundred "Israeli" intellectuals signed a petition calling for our release. Amnesty International did a report on us with pictures and interviews. B'tselem, the "Israeli" Human Rights Organization, wrote another very detailed report about our situation. As a result, our issue was put on the table and people could not deny or ignore it.

People inside the "Israeli" justice system started questioning the legality of detaining us. The justice system does not have an independent leadership role; it goes along with what the government wants. Even if they discussed our situation, it was not in their hands. It was in the hands of the government. Hashim Mahameed was the first Knesset member to visit us in jail. After that visit, it took three to four years to be introduced as an issue in the Knesset. Seven to eight members visited. They used to request, "Ahmed, write a letter to the Israelis saying that you are against violence!"

The question became: do I write a letter to reflect my convictions or to make the state happy? Their other option was to not mention Oslo (since they knew I rejected it) but to request that I at least call for a two-state solution. I told them, are you asking me to write what I believe, or what you want me to write for the "Israeli" public?

My jailers claimed that my past is violent and my future will be violent. In interrogation, they said they would stop interrogation if I agreed to leave the country for two years but I refused. I refused again when they tried to cut a similar deal through my lawyer. I told them two things: I have no plan to leave the country and I am not involved in any kind of violence as

an individual. If I have a relationship with violence, then try me based on that evidence. I told them if you could not prove I engaged in violent activities, then you are being the violent one by torturing and detaining me. You put me in jail, you harmed me physically, you interrogated me, you put my family through hell... so you're the ones who committed violence against me!

This position that you took proves that you are racist. Your aim is to imprison me because I am a Palestinian and not because of the security of the state of "Israel". You knew you couldn't prove anything as far as violence was concerned but you still wanted me inside. This is racism. Try me if you have something against me. The only thing they charged me with was writing. In the end, no matter how hard they tried, they knew I refused to be a spokesman for the PFLP so they could not try to convince me to take conciliatory positions like some others in the PFLP.

They wanted me to give them a statement that I was against military operations and violence. My answer was that this is a big issue relevant to the international laws of what constitutes violence and what constitutes terrorism and whether our right to struggle is this or that. This is not for me to decide. The international community should decide if our struggle is terrorism or freedom-fighting.

Take one thing from me: I will not condemn anything my people do to rid themselves of occupation. Do not expect me to condemn any guerrilla warfare against you by my people. I am not here to do that. As far as I am concerned, I did not commit violence against you but I will not condemn my people if they did. If you want to make deals with the PFLP, either go to Damascus or the PFLP's office in Ramallah. Do not come to me. There should not be negotiations between someone in jail and those who jail him. How could this uneven relationship be termed negotiations?

The last option they gave me: you do not want to represent the PFLP or be their spokesman. How about being the spokesman of the administrative detainees? I refused. The detainees were not a military threat to you. They were in their houses and offices. They were civilians. None of the administrative detainees engaged in violence because otherwise, you would have tried them for that.

The second factor that led to my release was protest action by a group of "Israeli" intellectuals who had influence. They were members of the Knesset who defended us not as a matter of principle but because they did not want the democratic 'face' of "Israel" to be blemished. We consider it a racist, occupying power! They were with us on one item: opposition to administrative detention. We had our motives and they had their motives. Do not try to sell us the idea that you are democratic, I say to them.

If you were truly democratic, you would not be occupying our land in the first place.

Occupation and democracy are not compatible. Raise your voice against occupation, settlements, our right of return, etc. and then we'll agree with you. Yet even if we disagree on all those issues, we still welcome you to fight with us against administrative detention.

There is no continuing threat so why do you put us in jail and then release us? Up until now, it is unclear why they let me go. I cannot tell you exactly why.

But I can tell you the only reason they imprisoned us was to suppress our activity because we are act to support of our people and they want to prevent us from continuing the struggle.

When they asked me about Arafat, I told them we are united against you. Even if our vision is different, we are not going to give you the pleasure of seeing us fight against each other.

Mahmoud Abbas tried an initiative (a main PNA initiative) to tell them to release me. That is another factor. Since my name was brought up in the Knesset and on the Israeli streets, Mahmoud Abbas felt comfortable addressing the issue because it was already in the air. The PNA took it upon itself to ask for my release after all of that. All the factors I mentioned culminated in my release.

Comment on the common perception that the PFLP as a party has been dissolved...

There still exists an historical task for the PFLP. The role of the PFLP is not over yet. It's special. We should have a different way of thinking, but it should exist with a new form and new approaches. The people are going to say that we need an alternative to the Palestinian Authority. That is why there is a need for the PFLP. The religious project also has its agenda and approach. It has its vision and project. In between these two camps, there is a large constituency and the PFLP should be concerned with winning them over. Neither of them represents the needs and desires of the shaab. Still, within this framework, we'll find instances where we can ally with the PA to tackle some issues, and with the Islamists to tackle other issues, while remaining autonomous. There are daily battles that we can fight alongside both camps, but this doesn't mean we melt into them. You need your own front to continue the struggle.

They say that religion solves all conflicts in life. If I were to address Islamists, I would ask them, where is your development plan? Where is their vision of how democracy ties into society? Where do they see the role of the liberation and activities of women in society as partners in life with men? Where is their clear political program? Where are their political tactics whenever there is an incident/happening? What is their position with respect to the unity of the Arab nation and the united aims of the Arab nation? How do they look at the status of other religions? What is their position on class struggle? 10% of our people are half-hungry and the other 90% are really hungry. How are they going to approach this? What is their position on imperialism? Sometimes they are against America; sometimes they are with them. Their position is not clear.

You need a vision and a program that the people can be convinced of. These are big issues and the Islamic front has to answer them so we can analyze them and work with them.

Whoever gives the right answers to the people to convince them will win over the masses. Taking in foggy generalities will get you nowhere. If Islam solves all problems, then what about the countries in the world that aren't Islamic but which flourished like Japan, the U.S., China, etc.? It is not enough to preach a solution; you must go into detail how you are going to achieve a solution.

The PFLP is a necessity and it is needed but it has a crisis within itself organizationally and this should be dealt with to lift it out of its crisis. Its crisis is not in its vision but in its organizational aspects. If everything in life progresses, the PFLP should progress too. The PFLP lost many members as a result of Oslo and it needs to reevaluate how it's going to approach people in the future.

We should restructure the PFLP to put it in a better situation. This is the main question the PFLP is facing. If they can do the transition/restructuring well, they will be the true leaders of the future. We should have a restructuring that does not only accept the theoretical thinking we had before; it has to renew itself to cope with the new realities, in structure as well as leadership.

What should the shaab's relationship with the PA be?

The PA's historical choice for livelihood is America and it depends on it for everything. There should be another philosophy instead of just depending on America. There is lots of corruption going on in the PA now. There is bad administration. People are lost and do not know what they want. They are not enthusiastic about anything. They are ready to accept anything. If we are to present an alternative, it should be a clear one. It should be a different vision from their vision. The relationship does not prevent us from joining forces on a daily basis on issues that relate to civil society. We should mobilize our forces with them in attacking these issues. We should not allow the Palestinian Authority to contain us and prevent us from having our own identity as the PFLP. I am against any political discussion with Arafat. [he digressed a bit in private about the Arafat meeting with Habash and Hawatmeh].

Using his program/agenda will legitimize him and his political thinking more than helping us achieve unity. Any group willing to discuss an alternative to Oslo would be beneficial to engage in. Every meeting is called for the sake of political unity but we should not be calling for that right now. What is needed now is not political unity that we used to raise as a slogan in the past; we should be asking for people's unity. The institutions in Palestine should get together and promote a program for the improvements of society. Unity among the people through their institutions instead of the political leaders should be our objective. It is better for the PFLP to unite its forces, fight occupation, help the masses ... not to sit with Arafat. The PFLP should have its priorities. There are many more issues to discuss. Arafat already made his line clear and we know it so why bother? Some PFLP leaders involved themselves in the

Labor Ministry (wizaret el-aamal).

They should not have. They should not have joined the police, the Information ministry, and the security department. If people were confused about the PFLP's position in the past because of these things, let me make at least that point clear.

Arafat chose a certain path through the U.S., and some say he will achieve his goals. He depends on the U.S. to support him financially and every decision should be agreed to by the U.S. Anything he wants to do is related to the United States. The other ideology is not to tie one's self to America because it will not give us the solution we need. My solution entails depending on ourselves and building a good relationship with the Arab masses and continuing the struggle without dependence on America.

Many FAV readers are living in the Diaspora. What advice or suggestions can you give them to be involved in the struggle?

Each person regardless of place of residence has his/her own role and they should complement the role of people elsewhere because our struggle is not over and the conditions we fight against are still there. They should not be competing with each other; they should be complementing each other. There are certain issues that are still in common between those on the inside and those living outside. We have a battle: they are trying to get us to forget about our identity. We should attack this battle jointly.

Since people are in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan and elsewhere, our enemy is trying to make this division permanent, not temporary, so that we will not ever be unified. They want each segment to solve its problem through the area it is in so we should stand against that. If they succeed in tackling us as shoe-boxed Palestinians, it will be easier for them to overcome us. If they try to tackle us as one people, they will fail. Regardless where our people are, they believe in one people and one common cause and this is what unites them and makes them work together. We have a lot of capabilities. Our people need to understand our history, attempt to preserve our language and culture and, besides that, they should keep in contact with the people back home through visiting them so that they keep the relationship strong.

September 16, 1998

(Source: Free Arab Voice <www.fav.net>)



Interview With George Habash, General Secretary Of The PFLP

Free Arab Voice Introduction: In this issue of the Free Arab Voice we present an exclusive interview with Dr. Habash, the General Secretary of the PFLP, on his opposition to dialogue with Arafat, and his future plans, including his forthcoming resignation from the General Secretariat of the PFLP (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine).

Prelude

It is an unfortunate fact that in our struggle against Zionism, we tend to pay more attention to ongoing political, military, or clandestine Zionist efforts against us, and less attention to the Zionist long-run effort to bring about our psychological defeat by tarnishing the symbols of the Palestinian and Arab struggle. Even the continuous humiliation and daily mistreatment of Yasser Arafat by "Israel", in spite of all his services rendered, serves the same Zionist purpose of bringing about Arab psychological defeat. It is crucial therefore that ALL those who work for Palestinian and Arab causes realize that when they sell out or buckle under pressure, they do not only compromise themselves, but a little part of the cause as well. This is true regardless of the activist's rank in the struggle, because the activist's unofficial public office is a trust bestowed by the people who are the first ones to be let down should s/he betray that trust. It is specifically that betrayal that oppressors will seek, not just for the sake of neutralizing the particular activist in question, but to demoralize other activists as well and to shroud the cause in despair.

Oslo, its defeatist mentality, and the institutions it generated on the ground are not only an oppressive status quo for the Palestinian and Arab people; they are a test in which you either cross or do not cross the line between patriotism and treason, or between justice and injustice. The latter are morally charged words frequently subject to ridicule of course, as it is in the best interest of oppressors anywhere to blur that line for those who might ever think of challenging existing power arrangements. Yet, when the DFLP and the PFLP cross that line, they don't only compromise themselves, but a piece of the Palestinian cause and the Arab left with them as well. It is in such circumstances that Dr. George Habash, an entrenched symbol of the Palestinian struggle, has to make his stand for the sake of Palestine and for the sake of hope.

Much confusion has surrounded the position of Dr. Habash, otherwise known as El Hakim, regarding his real position on his organization's dialogue with Arafat, and its setting of one foot in the track of the Oslo process. Thus the following is not an open-ended interview, but rather a serious attempt to clarify where El Hakim stands now.

In the following, you'll see that El Hakim remains El Hakim. He emerges unscathed. With wisdom and clarity, he dispels the mystification surrounding his position, while inserting what

looks like subtle messages between the lines as well. Read all about it. - The Free Arab Voice

[This interview was conducted for the Free Arab Voice (FAV) by Ibrahim Alloush]

What is your position on dialogue with Arafat? Why has the PFLP changed its position on such a dialogue? Is that related to the election of Barak?

Dialogue in this critical phase that the Palestinian cause is going through can't be rejected by any rational person, as a matter of principle. But we can't tackle this question only on an abstract level. Dialogue in principle is one thing, and dialogue with Arafat is another. We in the PFLP called for dialogue with everyone without exception, including dialogue with Arafat, when Netanyahu became prime minister several years ago. Such a call for dialogue had its justifications at the time. We called for dialogue with Arafat enthusiastically then, but Arafat didn't care much for dialogue. He took the whole thing with indifference.

So when Arafat becomes so eager now for dialogue with us, we have to ask ourselves why he was so much less eager for dialogue before. I asked myself how we may understand this shifting position of his. My answer to myself and to the Politbureau of the PFLP was that the U.S. Government now realizes that there has to be some kind of solution for the Palestinian question. Given their knowledge of Arafat's character, they most likely resolved to give him something that may be called a state, regardless of the content of such a state, of course. In such a case, Arafat has to accept fundamental clauses to give to "Israel" in return for this state, or call it a 'reduced state' if you will.

In exchange for this state, Arafat will have to acquiesce to very fundamental concessions, from the point of view of the Palestinian people, specifically on the issues of Jerusalem and the right of return of five million Palestinians abroad. "Israel" will not at this stage make any concessions in these two crucial areas. Other areas like settlements, water, and the borders of the 'reduced state' may be on the negotiating table. Whereas Jerusalem and the right of return of the five million to Palestine are not. Arafat knows that his acceptance of such concessions in these two areas is equivalent to committing a crime against the Palestinian people. How could the Palestinian people give up Jerusalem and the right of return?

That's why Arafat suddenly became enthusiastic for dialogue with us: he wants a cover for committing such a crime. That's why I oppose dialogue with Arafat at this point. He wants us to become a cover to legitimize his concessions.

But if you were against dialogue with Arafat, why don't you try to change the position of the PFLP on such a dialogue,



especially given all the weight you carry inside the PFLP?

I am currently doing my best to change the position of the PFLP on dialogue with Arafat. I am going through a difficult phase in this period of my life. There has been inside me a furious contradiction that needed to be resolved between the political line of the PFLP that I helped delineate since the establishment of the PFLP on one hand, and the question of democracy inside the organization of the PFLP on the other hand. Because in the final analysis the majority of my comrades inside the Central Committee of the PFLP accepted the call for dialogue with Arafat. They have their premises that I don't subscribe to. This led to a sharp contradiction within me: should I give priority to democracy [majority rule] or to the established political line of the PFLP? The latter mind you is no less important than the former. Eventually I went with the latter: the political line of the PFLP, our scrupulous positions, and the constants of the Palestinian struggle.

Hence, some comrades in the Central Committee suggested the following to me: "Dr. Habash, since you say that you no longer want to be the General Secretary of the PFLP, and since that will be settled in two or three months when the PFLP's Sixth Convention meets, we will give you your perfect freedom to present your point of view on dialogue with Arafat in public. In return, you remain General Secretary until the Sixth Convention meets." And this is what I chose to do, and am doing right now.

So it is true that you decided to retire from political activism? What are your future plans?

Leaving the position of General Secretary of the PFLP is one thing, and retiring from political activism is another. I want to resign from the General Secretariat for a number of reasons: 1) I want to set an example that it's not necessary for anyone to remain General Secretary forever, 2) I want to find the time to study and draw the lessons of my political experience and to write them down for the benefit of future generations. I've tried to do that in the recent past, but I couldn't find the time really, and

continued on the next page...

"Are German Courts Helping The Turkish Regime?"

Interview With Lawyer Ahmet Yuksel, Trial Observer At The DHKP-C Proceedings In Germany

At the end of November 1999, İlhan Yelkovan, a member of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C), was sentenced to life in prison by a court in Hamburg, Germany on murder charges after a questionable trial. Other trials against DHKP-C members in Germany are set to get underway in the near future. Members are also facing repression in other European countries. How did this situation come about?

At first, it seemed like the usual type of repression, but the reality soon became clear. In the summer of 1997, Serafettin Gul, the head of the DHKP-C in Germany, and two other comrades were arrested in Germany. Shortly thereafter came a major sweep against DHKP-C supporters in France. Around 50 front members are facing charges in France at the moment. 10 party members are in prison in France. In Germany, 9 DHKP-C sympathizers are in prison.

How is the situation in other European countries?

In the past, the authorities in other countries were more restrained. But in France, there have been state attacks on the DHKP-C in the past. In 1994, the French police arrested the chairman of the front, Dursun Karatas, and the people with him at a border crossing. A few months later, the authorities were forced to let him go. After the chairman of the front fled abroad, French courts charged dozens of followers with crimes. At this time, German authorities were working very closely with the French police. Step by step, the repression spread to other European countries. In Switzerland, 1 member is in prison, in Belgium there are 4. Even in Austria, DHKP-C supporters are

threatened and intimidated by the state authorities.

Is a central strategy hidden behind this?

In France, imprisoned DHKP-C members have been jointly questioned by police from France, The Netherlands, Germany, and Belgium. That shows an international dimension. But it seems that everything is being directed by Germany. In October, shortly after alleged DHKP-C functionary Nuri Eryuksel was detained in Switzerland on a German arrest warrant, German intelligence agents from the BND visited migrants from Turkey and tried to recruit spies. The BND agents assumed that the entire leadership of the party was now in custody and that the DHKP-C would be defeated.

The involvement of the BND seems to suggest a possible involvement by NATO as well.

The DHKP-C wages an armed struggle exclusively in Turkey. In other countries, they abide by legal, democratic means. This point is emphasized in many publications by the front. The German authorities know that this party presents no danger to Germany's domestic security. The repression against the DHKP-C is based on foreign policy interests. We assume that the USA and Germany are waging repression against the DHKP-C in order to aid their NATO partner Turkey.

Until the recent wave of repression, Belgium had no confrontations with supporters of the DHKP-C. The DHKP-C is not banned in Belgium as it is in Germany. Now, suddenly, public meetings have been banned without reason, and people have been arrested. Belgium has seemingly been told to carry out repression as

well. There is a link between the repression against the DHKP-C in Turkey and Europe and the trials in Germany. In charges drafted by federal authorities in Germany, the front's struggle against the Turkish regime is often mentioned. It goes so far as to legitimize the repression being carried out by Turkish fascism.

But here, only crimes which are said to have been carried out in Germany are at issue.

That's the official reason for the repression, yes. Nuri Eryuksel, who was arrested in Switzerland and is awaiting deportation to Germany, spent 11 years in prison in Turkey following the 1980 military coup. Now this nearly blind man is being denied urgent medical care. Nuri Eryuksel is in isolation custody in Switzerland, because the German federal authorities in Karlsruhe have described him as very dangerous. And the DHKP-C's European spokesman, Mesut Demirel, who is facing charges in Hamburg, has been questioned by the court about his work in Turkey as editor of the newspaper 'Mucadele'. This journalist spent more than 10 years in prison in Turkey. Now his legitimate political work as a leftist journalist and a spokesperson are being defamed as "terrorism". That's absurd.

Why is the DHKP-C facing such attacks in Europe at the moment?

The DHKP-C is part of the fundamental opposition. Despite heavy repression, the movement has been able to further develop its struggle in Turkey and has been gaining support among Turkish and Kurdish migrants in Europe. Turkey is a neo-colony of the Western industrialized nations, who wish to pursue their interests in the Middle East at all costs. Turkey is of strategic importance as a bridge to the Near East and a launching pad for possible NATO attacks in the Caucasus. That's why all revolutionary, anti-imperialist perspectives in Turkey have to be crushed.

(Interview by Jorg Hilbert; Published in 'Junge Welt', December 30, 1999; Translated by Arm The Spirit)

...continued from the previous page

3) I want to establish a research center concerned with the study of the issues pertaining to the Palestinian and Arab struggle.

In short, there's a big difference between leaving the General Secretariat and leaving political action. Leaving the latter is not possible.

Does your health have anything to do with this decision?

No, my criterion for health considerations hinges on my ability to do work, and so my health is still in good shape.

Are you going to leave the General Secretariat only or the PFLP?

I won't leave political action, and I won't

leave for health reasons... I'll be making a speech in the Sixth Convention of the PFLP explaining why I'm leaving the General Secretariat, and the new tasks that I'll be devoting myself to.

One final question, what was your position on Nayef Hawatmeh's (the General Secretary of the DFLP) infamous handshake with Weisman?

My position was very clear.

Which was?

...its complete condemnation!

October 15, 1999

(Source: Free Arab Voice <<http://www.fav.net>>)



The Victory Of Our Death Fast Resistance

Statement From The DHKP-C European Organization

For 63 days resistance to German imperialism was witnessed both inside and outside prison.

Ilhan Yelkuvan resisted such German practices as solitary confinement, attempts to make him surrender and to Germanise him, he waged a battle using the cells of his own body by converting his hunger strike to a Death Fast, which began on November 30th, 1999.

All the DHKP-C prisoners in Germany participated in this resistance with solidarity hunger strikes for an indefinite period, and some non-political prisoners joined in with solidarity hunger strikes.

Also the Cephe (Front) prisoners in Belgium and France joined in the resistance.

More than 1,000 Party-Front prisoners in Turkey initially participated in 3-day hunger strikes, and from January 24, 2000, they converted them into indefinite hunger strikes with the slogan of "one for all and all for one".

Also the prisoners from TKP(ML), TKP/ML, TIKP, Devrimci Yol, TIKB, PKK-Revolutionary Line Fighters were on 3-day solidarity hunger strike in several prisons. Also our supporters and people participated fully in the resistance that the prisoners extended on a daily basis.

Thousands of fax messages and letters were sent, posters were hung, press releases were distributed and our resistance was announced to European public opinion. Demonstrations took place in front of all German Embassies in Europe.

The buildings of Amnesty International and the Goethe Institute in England, as well as the Goethe Institute in Holland, the Cologne cathedral and SPD offices in Germany and the office of a trade union in Switzerland were occupied. The Holland-Germany frontier was blocked for 3 hours, a 60 km-long tailback was formed and the resistance was announced to the motorists. Marches were organised in Hamburg, Cologne and London to support Ilhan Yelkuvan. German imperialism wanted to prevent the activities of the DHKP-C by banning it, by pressing charges against tens of Front supporters in accordance with Article "129a" of the Criminal Law, by arresting people and forcing them to co-operate with the authorities against the DHKP-C.

All of this was not enough. They practised a wide-ranging policy of repression against our prisoners in an attempt to make them surrender. Ilhan Yelkuvan was placed in solitary confinement and all his rights were taken away from him because he did not give up the thought of being a member of the Front. He was banned from seeing other prisoners by using the pretext that he might spread propaganda among other people from Turkey.



This is clearly a denial of freedom of thought and racism. This means that you are not allowed to speak your mother tongue or continue to live according to your own culture, you will be made to give up your political thoughts and be subject to Germanisation. These practices are an insult and an attempt to denigrate the peoples of Turkey.

It is a lie to say that there are human rights, freedom of thought, democracy, equality and justice in Germany. The attacks against our people and prisoners in Germany are the practices of the heirs of the Nazis.

The decision to inflict arbitrary confinement is a deliberate and politically motivated decision. This decision was reached in the interests of fascism in Turkey. Germany is co-operating with Turkey both economically and politically and therefore is selling Turkey Leopard tanks and other weapons.

Germany also supported fascists of the MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) and the Hizbulah supporters who are striving for a Sharia state.

They are also responsible for the Hizbulah killing fields. They are an accomplice of the Susurluk state. The peoples of the world have not forgotten what the Nazis did. Nazism is condemned by the peoples of the entire world. Therefore Germany's current attacks will not be forgiven either. We represent justice, freedom and democracy.

We are waging war against the fascist regime in Turkey and imperialism. Our struggle is not directly against the German state but against fascism in Turkey.

In the Ulucanlar prison 10 prisoners were massacred just because they demanded an extra ward.

Ilhan also was denied his rights and left to die over the last 10 months because he would not change his thoughts.

These attacks are a part of the policies of imperialist countries led by the U.S. to make the revolutionary movements surrender. They are in fear of the struggle for revolution wherever it may be. The resistance of revolutionaries, the hope of people's liberation, to all sieges and policies of surrendering, make imperialism feel uneasy. This is the main problem.

We did not choose to be refugees and to live apart from our country. Our minds and hearts are always with the people in our country. We never see ourselves as being outside of the war despite being behind the front-line. They see us as "black heads" in Europe, make us work in the most menial jobs, they deny us our cultures and values, they attempted to make us forget our language and they tried to drag our children into the swamp of drug addiction. For 30 years they tried to Germanise us, destroy our people and their culture and applied a policy of assimilation. Today a large section of our children cannot speak their own language. This is the result of 30 years of Germanisation and of racist policies. It is the legitimate right of the entire peoples of the world to fight against rac-

ism and violation of freedom of thought.

We declare to the whole world that we will always sacrifice our lives, whenever it is necessary, for the sake of our thoughts. No matter what they have done, we will never give up seeing the problems of our people in Europe as our own and fighting for our country and people. Rather than living like a slave, rather than having no home and roots; we prefer to fight for our freedom and to die for our thoughts.

Therefore we resisted German imperialism's bans, attacks and policies aimed at making our prisoners surrender. Our resistance which was extended by our prisoners and combined with those outside the prisons on a daily basis ended in victory.

- Ilhan Yelkuvan's isolation was ended and his demands were accepted.

- Ilhan Yelkuvan will be transferred to another prison and stay with two other prisoners from Turkey in the same cell.

- He will have the same rights as the other prisoners.

- He will be allowed to work.

- He will be allowed to exercise and his cell door will be kept open for two hours in the evenings.

The German state has realised how much power we have. For the last 30 years no one could place a ban on our thoughts and neither can the German state.

From now on, whenever there is an attack against our prisoners or Ilhan Yelkuvan's gains are neutralised or the Germanisation policies are targeted against our people, the German state will come face to face with the Front. We will keep an eye on the gains Ilhan Yelkuvan has made. Our struggle against the denial of freedom of thought will continue.

We thank all those who made efforts to crown our resistance with victory. We thank those who were in solidarity with our struggle, those who took part in occupations and demonstrations, our supporters, our people and comrades from other organisations, our prisoners who were on hunger strike and ready to sacrifice themselves, German revolutionaries and democrats and our friends all over Europe who supported us with their internationalist consciousness.

Down With Imperialism, Bans On Freedom Of Thought, Racism...!

We Will Resist To The Death, We Will Never Give Up Our Thoughts Or Our Part In The Revolution In Anatolia...

Long Live The DHKP-C!

Long Live Our Leader Dursun Karatas!



Interview With DHKP-C Prisoners

"The hungerstrike until death from 1996 has, because of its results, achieved the character of a political victory..."

In the summer of 1996, a hungerstrike by political prisoners in Turkey kept the whole country in its grip for months, determining the political agenda.

Prisoners from ten revolutionary organisations participated in the hungerstrike until death, which lasted for 69 days, and 12 prisoners died: Aygun Ugur (TKP(ML)), Altan Berdan Kerimgiller (DHKP-C), Ilginc Ozkeskin (DHKP-C), Huseyin Demircioglu (MLKP), Ali Ayata (TKP(ML)), Mujdat Yanat (DHKP-C), Tahsin Yilmaz (TIKB), Ayse Idil Erkmen (DHKP-C), Hicabi Kucuk (TIKB), Yemliha Kaya (DHKP-C), Osman Akgun (TIKB) and Hayati Can (TKP(ML)).

Last summer, co-workers from the "Rote Hilfe" (Red Aid) from Kiel (Germany) conducted an interview with DHKP-C prisoners in Turkey. Two years after the hungerstrike until death, we want to hear from them about the present situation and how their struggle is going now.

How has the prison situation been since 1996?

Before answering this question, maybe we should explain what was the goal of the hungerstrike of 1996 and what a victory this action was. Then the answer to your question is easier to understand. The hungerstrike until death of 1996 was not held for the recognition of limited rights in prison. Because of its results, the hungerstrike also has the character of a political victory, looking at the future of the revolutionary struggle, where the heart of the struggle is formed by the existential struggle of the revolutionaries against fascism.

In those days, fascism did everything to carry out its plan of beating back the revolutionary struggle and repressing the demands of the people for rights and justice. Their plan

was directed against all segments of society. As their first level of attack, they chose the prisons and the revolutionary prisoners. It has been important to beat back fascism at its first step when it increased its attacks in prison in a deadly way. The hungerstrike until death then transformed into an existential struggle, destroying the core of the fascist plan, silencing the people and the revolution.

In short, we can say our action cannot be reduced to the demand of closing the isolation prison in Eskesehir and giving back the rights for defence and medical treatment. The action, besides pushing through the demands (albeit at the cost of 12 deaths), also brought a political victory which in a very short time revealed the true face of fascism in Turkey to all the people in the world. Furthermore, the attempt to take the revolutionary struggle hostage was stopped and beaten back.

The action found a lot of resonance, it developed new values and new possibilities for the revolutionary struggle and thus it reached its goal.

Turkey is a country which is ruled by fascism. Under the conditions of fascism, the existential struggle between fascism and the revolution continues, even though the intensity of the struggle might differ from time to time. The prisons also constitute one of the many places where the struggle is waged. From this view, the revolutionary prisoners thus are a favourite target of fascism. The prisoners try to gain their rights through several actions, fascism tries to curtail these rights and then the prisoners resist this and struggle again. Fascism takes a step back and prepares for new attacks. This law is in existence since the beginning of the revolutionary struggle and it will remain in existence for as long as fascism exists. So it's no mistake to keep this aspect in mind in evaluating the phase after the hungerstrike until death of 1996.

As the first demand of our action, the isolation prison in Eskesehir was closed. The denial of our right of defence and medical treatment, the attacks against our families, arresting them, it all clearly decreased. However, after this period the attacks took another form and they occurred on several levels. For instance, they no longer talked about a central isolation prison as in Eskesehir, now isolation cells were built in the individual prisons instead. They also denied us the right of medical treatment. Because of that, we have had more deaths recently as a result of lacking medical care. We call this silent annihilation afterwards. The relatives and family members of

the prisoners are being arrested again, their visits are being prevented by all kinds of pestering and nagging. And then there are always the provocations, or something is thought of to create provocations.

Severe attacks occur again and again. On March 30, 1998, for instance. In Buca, 10 DHKP-C prisoners were kidnapped from prison. But this attack as well was beaten back because of the determined resistance of the prisoners. Even though circumstances might differ in the individual prisons from time to time, most important is our determined resistance against the attacks and assaults of fascism, to beat back the attacks, making every sacrifice necessary. Because this will be a factor which will make fascism retreat permanently, creating a basis at the same time for a fertile ground for our achieved successes.

How do you organize your activities and your life?

The reason why fascism chooses prison as a permanent target for their attacks is on the one hand the fact that we have transformed it into a place of the revolution, into schools of our party, that we don't give up our struggle in jail, that we do not lose our faith in the revolution, and that we succeeded in becoming a moral institution in the eyes of the people. Our lives and our activities must be seen and judged in that context. The question is who poses the question of power in prison, the revolutionaries or fascism.

However circumstances in prison might be, we determine reality and the issue of power in the prisons. What we do and how we live is determined by this alone. We do not allow fascism to enter here. We see our line of life as a part, as an ideological, political and practical support for the revolutionary struggle. In that sense we also have a written statute which determines our communal life, our political education, our relations with our relatives, our principles and rules in all details. This statute was discussed and approved by all members of the DHKP-C, it's valid for all imprisoned members of the DHKP-C. In all prisons, these common principles form the basis for our lives and our activities, naturally considering local circumstances. The common frame of mind develops in real life the collectivity on the basis of revolutionary principles. On the other hand, the collectivity strengthens our mental and moral unity in real life. It's fundamental in our life to permanently practice revolutionary discipline, collectivism, political education, productivity and an attitude which prevents the dissolution of the revolutionary struggle.

On that basis, we are living in a community, we participate in joint political education, and we also are active culturally and in sports. Besides that there are of course the individual activities which support the struggle in a posi-



tive way. For us, such a life constitutes a shield which protects us against the attempts of fascism to destroy us, to break our consciousness. Our socialist conviction, our love for our people and our country, our responsibility for all our peoples, is reflected in our entire life and it strengthens our consciousness. That's why fascism tries to isolate us, and if that doesn't succeed, sabotage our lives. It's not important whether we are with 300 people or alone, our lives and our activities stem from this consciousness.

It cannot be ignored that the people are organizing on all levels. Students, workers, civil servants, the people's councils for instance. How do you see your place in that?

The struggle inside the prisons signified important phases of the revolutionary struggle in our country. We might even say that one of the special characteristics of the revolutionary struggle in our country is the role of the revolutionary struggle in the prisons. The practice of the revolutionaries in the prisons has time and again played a determining role, on the one hand for the future of the revolutionary struggle, but on the other for the future of the individual political prisoner as well. In our country, the revolutionary prisoners are influenced by the struggle of the people, and vice versa their struggle influences the people. Our struggle inside the prisons has become stronger and broader, not for realizing more agreeable conditions of life, but rather on the basis of the revolutionary struggle and the problems connected with that. In their 30 year history, the DHKP-C prisoners have always interpreted imprisonment from these aspects. It's important that imprisonment, keeping the body within four walls, does not jail the mind. Under those circumstances, prisoners with a free mind can overcome imprisonment and its consequences and they can become part of the struggle of the people. Then they are able to fulfil their given tasks in the struggle with success. In our country, there were times when the struggle inside the prisons was decisive for the struggle outside. For example during the period of the coup. The junta had tortured hundreds of thousands of people outside, thousands were arrested. All - revolutionaries, democrats and intellectuals - were driven together in prison and under those circumstances, every fight for rights, every struggle for freedoms, transformed into resistance against the terror of the junta against the people. A struggle which served as a barricade against all the repression and aggression could only develop inside the prisons. After the junta had silenced the unions, associations, even the bourgeois opposition, with repression and bans, it turned against the prisoners. If the revolutionaries and their consciousness could be broken inside the prison, the road would be paved for their system of exploitation.

Therefore they started with forcing the prisoners to wear prison clothing to destroy their individuality and dignity, but the prisoners did not allow that. In January 1984, three of our comrades and a comrade from the TIKB lost

their lives during a 75 day long hungerstrike, but the junta's plan was stopped. The political victory of 1984 has, besides gaining existential basic rights, made an impression upon the people and it became a propelling force in the struggle against fascism. As our example shows, prisons and revolutionary prisoners can become of strategic importance at certain times. In that sense it constitutes an important part of the struggle in our country. The level of importance can vary, increase or decrease, from time to time, but it is never without importance. That means that the prisoners have to resist under all circumstances, they must never surrender to fascism, they must be part of the struggle. As we have said after your first question, the prisons were attacked at a moment when hundreds of thousands of people on the outside took to the streets: the politicizing of the people, the increasing level of organizing and the political struggle as a whole had to be stopped. The barricade struggle in 1995 when three of our comrades fell in Buca, or January 4 when four comrades were murdered during an operation of the security troops and when we counteracted these attacks with barricades and taking security officers as prisoners, must be seen in that context.

Looking at the present situation, the role of the revolutionary prisoners and the prisons in the struggle hasn't changed in itself. The prisoners are an active and inseparable part in the struggle and the organizing of the people. This role can come to the foreground from time to time, depending on the attacks by fascism. But just as the students, the workers and the civil servants, they are organized and function as a part of the people's struggle. The only difference is that the prisoners are confined within four walls. Nothing changed in their responsibility towards the people and the country in the struggle against fascism. That is to say that they are a part in the struggle for power.

The state tries to lock up the prisoners in isolation cells. What will be the reaction of the prisoners in such a situation?

Maybe we should start with clarifying why the state wants to implement such a policy. To begin with, it has to be clear that what the state wants to force upon the prisoners, whatever they call it, whatever the form, indifferent when, is to take them hostage. Taking them hostage means to separate them from their conviction, from their ideology they have fought for until now, where they have been tortured for, locked up in prison for years, lost their comrades... in short they are supposed to betray themselves and their people.

This hostage-taking is not something physical, and it's not the giving up of the revolutionary struggle by an individual or by one hundred prisoners, it's rather the effect of such a process, that is to say the effect of the persons, driven to betrayal, not wanting to know anymore of their ideology and conviction, this effect upon the people and upon their comrades. When you think about that it is perfectly clear that such an effect influences the struggle negatively and that these people are being

misused to destroy the self-confidence of the people. For the state, the most important goals in this are to spread mistrust, the giving up of the conviction and the goal, the breaking of their own identity. Revolutionaries have become moral standards who, whatever the form of torture and repression, will not break their word to the people, who will not hesitate to die for their conviction, thus giving the people conviction and determination as well. This constitutes a danger to fascism, therefore one attack follows the other. The demand for building isolation cells, since 1977, time and again on the agenda, constitutes the continuation of these attacks.

As you know, an isolation prison was opened in Eskesehir in 1996. Present policy is to build isolation cells in all prisons so that they all become "Eskesehirs". Spreading the attacks aims at splitting up a given resistance because simultaneous resistance in several prisons gives a stronger position of negotiation towards the state. With the decentralization of its isolation policy, that is to say with introducing isolation cells in all the local prisons, the state aims at breaking a centrally organized resistance, at the other hand they also want to win the public opinion for this policy by putting non-political prisoners in the isolation blocks as well. But the reality of fascism and the fascist policies are manifest.

That's the state's calculation. The policy of introducing isolation blocks, constantly reappearing, aims at separating the political prisoners, at weakening the resistance and, in course of time, making the political prisoners into collaborators. But introducing the separate isolation cells in the prison at different times will not change anything about our central co-ordination, that is to say the simultaneous co-ordinated resistance in all the prisons. Even when only one of our comrades is put into isolation, hundreds of prisoners will rise up in all the prisons. That was shown on March 30, in Buca. Our comrades were kidnapped gangster-style so their whereabouts would be unknown but all the DHKP-C prisoners reacted with actions like taking the guards hostage, building barricades or refusing to be counted. The state tried to test the reactions inside the prisons but when it became obvious they couldn't act like they pleased, the state withdrew. As mentioned before, such a retreat is only temporary, of course, and when the preparations are finished, or when a suitable situation occurs, attacks will be launched again. But our reaction will be swift. None of us will disappear into a isolation cell. We will resist, if need be we'll die. We will break down these cells with our hands and teeth. All the DHKP-C prisoners are that determined. Given such a situation, the full attention of the country will be on the prisons, the resistance of the revolutionaries, again.

There are several forms of repression in Turkey. Which is the most problematic?

Of course there are different forms of repression in our country. It's not always possible, or even necessary, to differentiate ac-

cording to their importance because they are all based on the same, fascism. Fascism is expressed in all its cruelty in our country. Exploitation and barbarism rule on all levels. This state is a contra-guerrilla state which wages a war against the people, using the methods of the contra-guerrilla. Oppression, tyranny, exploitation, disappearances and murders, the cruelties against the Kurdish people, the burning down of villages, forced deportations, torture, fascist terror attacks, etcetera. We could list a dozen other forms of repression, from mass lay-offs to provocations at demonstrations. To see the fascist tactics on all the levels of life isn't difficult at all. The cruelties which occurred in the gas chambers of Hitler are reflected in our country in the collections of the cut-off ears of the revolutionaries. Is it possible to make a difference between Hitler-fascism and fascism in our country, at least in the way it is applied to individuals, when we look at the way our comrades are massacred? This is the naked truth we have to face. Turkey is ruled by fascism. Fascism is a way of government which is based on repression and that influences all the practices and policies which are applied. When we speak about the different forms of repression in Turkey, we speak about fascism in Turkey,

nothing else. When we apply your question to the prisons in particular, we can see many parallels. What is implemented now is a fascist policy we call "silent destruction". How is this done? Let us give a concrete answer. As you know, the survivors of the hungerstrike until death of 1996 suffered serious physical and psychological damage. Already during the first phase, the justice department refused medical treatment in the Bayrampaşa prison. The doctors were refused entrance in the other prisons as well. Even the treatment in hospital of the prisoners which were near death, shortly after the hungerstrike until death was ended, was hindered. Although even official forensic-medical institutions regarded the continued imprisonment of severely handicapped prisoners as irresponsible - they are still incarcerated. Prisoners who are unable to move without help, who cannot carry out their daily activities, were given medical statements which said: there are no objections to continue imprisonment. This not only applies to the participants of the hungerstrike until death, it applies to all prisoners. As a consequence of this policy of annihilation, several prisoners have died lately like Umit Dogan (...) in the prison of Aydin, Kalender Kayapinar in Canakkale, Yunus Yaman in An-

kara, Kazim Tunc in Nevşehir and Polat Iyit in Sagmaçilar.

Another dimension of this practice is that medical treatment of prisoners, for as far as they are brought to external hospitals, is prevented by soldiers on the spot. It even goes as far that prisoners who should be medically treated are being beaten and tortured.

In short, this policy of silent destruction can be regarded as another form of the policy of hostage-taking. Thus fascism states "when I cannot kill with bombs and bullets, I'll do it by means of illnesses". Prison conditions create the physical causes for diseases, epidemics, completing this policy. That fascism breaks its own laws is in its nature, but this policy creates conditions which makes all shiver.

How can the struggle of the political prisoners be supported by institutions in Europe? What can we do?

To begin with, we want to emphasize that all have to make the anti-fascist struggle their own, apart from the fact that this is of course the task of the people which are governed by fascism. More than ever, it's important that internationalist consciousness and internationalism are kept alive. On the one hand, this will give us the opportunity to keep alive our mutual relations, on the other hand we can make concrete our responsibility towards the other peoples of the world.

We as DHKP-C are and always were an internationalist movement and dozens of actions and activities resulted from that. Comrades fell during these actions. As prisoners as well, we have kept internationalism alive inside the prisons. We have realised resistance and action on an internationalist level. In the future as well, we keep high this consciousness which gives us strength and pride. Therefore every form of support from people in other countries, from revolutionaries, democratic groups or individuals, is important to us and really valuable. It's clear that the more we are, the sooner we'll achieve freedom, the sooner we'll achieve a world in which we can lead a dignified life. There are concrete ways in which institutions in western Europe can support our struggle. We have always considered these kinds of international actions to be of great value. At this moment there are comrades, also from other revolutionary organisations, who have survived the hungerstrike until death but who can no longer survive under prison conditions. So there could be actions to demand the release of these prisoners. Besides that, material support is needed for the treatment of our comrades. There are so many comrades who cannot be operated on because the state will not cover the costs. The people in Europe could also unmask fascism in Turkey.

Finally we want to emphasize again that we were very glad with your compassion and solidarity.

It's of the greatest importance that you support our struggle, that you have chosen the side of the peoples in Turkey.

We thank you and wish you good luck with your work.

DHKP-C Prisoners Requiring Medical Aid

Attached is a list of DHKP-C prisoners who urgently need medical help, most of them as a consequence of the hungerstrike until death. All of their illnesses are backed by reports of recognized hospitals. The illnesses vary from leukaemia, hepatitis B, tuberculosis, chronic lung illnesses, paralysis to neurological illnesses. Most of them can no longer carry out the most elementary needs without help. There are illnesses like the Wernike-Korsakow syndrome as a consequence of the hungerstrike until death.

Bayrampaşa Prison (İstanbul)

Ali Yalcin: Hungerstrike until death (HS). Wernike Korsakov.

Mehmet Yaman: HS. General weakness, hypersensitive for light and sounds, hearing loss, equilibrium disorder, problems with sight. Mustafa Goek: HS. Wernike-Korsakow.

Mehmet Goevel: HS. General weakness, equilibrium disorder, dizziness, problems with sight.

Seni Mert: Chronic bronchitis. No reply to his request for treatment.

Einali Sarielmas: Severe bronchitis.

Oktay Karatas: Deaf in both ears since the attack on the Umranije prison in 1995. Not treated because of lack of money.

Yazgi Goender: TB

Gamze Mimaroglu: TB

Sejyan Dogun: Hepatitis B

Gencali Karabulut: Hepatitis B

Ali Simsek: Hepatitis B

Cengiz Bayir: Epilepsy. At present two at

tacks weekly.

Bursa Prison

Ibrahim Dogan: HS. Memory loss. Wernike-Korsakov.

Bartin Prison

Abdulaziz Nakci: HS. Cannot remember important events of the past and present, equilibrium disorder, hypersensitive for sound. Selmani Ozcan: HS. Equilibrium disorder, speech disorder, tremors.

Cankiri Prison

Serdar Gelir: HS. Memory loss, general weakness, motion disorders.

Maximum Security Prison Of Ankara

Zeynap Goenguermez: HS. Memory loss, equilibrium disorder.

Aydin/Buca Prison

Ali Teke: HS. Can no longer function independently.

Bernar Satar: HS. Not capable of carrying out activities of everyday life.

Tamer Cadirci: HS. Leukaemia, prison authorities prevent treatment.

(Source: Rote Hilfe Magazine #4/1998 <<http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/rote-hilfe>>)

Interview With Former Political Prisoner Joseba Uranga Gastesi

Interview by Manfred Ostrowski

I am Joseba Uranga Gastesi, born in Tolosa, Gipuzkoa on January 26, 1964. On January 19, 1984, I was arrested by the Civil Guard in my native village, for being a member of ETA; and on March 10, 1998, I was released by the state after having been though a number of prisons - Carabanchel, Alcalá-Meco, Herrera de la Mancha, Sevilla II, Granada and El Puerto de Santa María II. I am now living in Tolosa, the village where I was born, and perhaps soon I'll move in with my girlfriend Leire to a small apartment.

The Situation Of The Basque Political Prisoners And Solidarity With The Prisoners

What would you like to say about the time you spent in prison?

It was really hard. The cruelty of the enemy has surpassed all standards, especially after the policy of dispersion was put into force, and this had terrible effects on the political prisoners; considerable physical and psychological effects. Notwithstanding, during a long time spent in prison I had the opportunity to meet good people; worthy people. It goes without saying that the liberation struggle - in the streets, in the prisons - also has some positive experiences which I carry with me. One must take into account that torture is not applied in prison, but when you are in police custody. In the prisons, ill-treatment (beatings etc.) are a normal thing for the ordinary prisoner as well as for the political, but this has to be understood as a revenge; a revenge carried out by the warders. This is made evident, for example, by the reports of ill-treatment that we hear after an ETA action.

What media did you have access to?

Before dispersion started, every week we used to read the newspapers and magazines from previous days. Later, they did not even allow us to receive EGIN, and many years passed before we were guaranteed, more or less, the right to information. Nowadays, each prison uses its own criteria. Generally, EGIN comes in without problem. But not the media the state considers to be "dangerous". And almost anything could be labelled dangerous.

How is the prisoner resistance today?

Prisoner resistance takes place now in a wider context. Taken into consideration that a prisoner in isolation cannot do much against

dispersion, the Abertzale Left long ago decided to open the prison front and, consequently, take it from inside the prison walls into the streets. So, the duty to face prison is not only in the hands of the prisoners; resistance takes place in all areas where the Abertzale Left is present. Inside, the prisoners go on hunger strikes, lock-ups, stoppages, and do what they can according to the possibilities available to them. Outside, resistance is proposed to every level according to the activities of each organization, and every member of the Abertzale Left [Basque nationalist left].

What value has the solidarity for the Basque prisoners?

It has an enormous value, since solidarity is conveyed in two ways. On the one hand, it is conveyed in human terms and, on the other, as a political expression. No matter how you look at it, the Basque prisoners are political prisoners. Solidarity has made possible, for example, the achievement of many things in the prison; for example, and this is no small achievement, that being in a critical situation, the pressure from the street has been able to repel repression. Solidarity has improved situations. Besides, the prisoners appreciate all the initiatives whole-heartedly the solidarity, which is conveyed in the two ways mentioned.

Which is the way for bringing the prisoners back to the Euskal Herria?

All ways. The precarious situation of the prisoners does not allow any pseudo-solutions or proposals. In this sense, it seems to me that all proposals to bring back the prisoners to Euskal Herria are legitimate, although I don't identify myself too much with some of them. But it is clear that popular pressure will bring back the prisoners and, therefore, I consider very important the initiatives put forward by the people united by the wish to bring the prisoners to Euskal Herria. There we find platforms, committees, etc., each one working in its own way. But as I have said, it must be people's imagination what will decide the road to follow.

Can the Basque conflict come to an end without amnesty? Is the Basque nationalist left looking for ways to achieve amnesty?

No. Amnesty does not suppose the mere release of the prisoners, but a good solution to the problems that brought people to prison. In the road to political negotiation, the issue of amnesty is a point to be agreed by ETA and the Spanish state. Once the prisoners and refu-

gees are freed, it will be possible to develop a popular debate in freedom and with all the democratic guarantees. On the other hand, the Abertzale Left is not looking for an opportunity to get the prisoners out. If they are freed, fine! But the prisoners themselves in many occasions have said that their liberation would be the consequence of a negotiating process and thus, not to think that the political conflict would be overcome with the release of the prisoners. The state in 1977 granted amnesty but after a very short period of time, the prisons began to get filled again with new militants. The prisoners, as members of the Abertzale Left, are in agreement with this objective.

Basque Socialism And Participatory Democracy: Attainable Aims Or A Mere Dream?

If the Basque people were given the option to choose a socialist mode, would they choose it?

Yes, but it doesn't seem to me very appropriate to make the offer in this way. Nowhere has the people adopted socialism through an election - the case of Allende did not happen like that - but through a revolution, through a struggle. People can choose the struggle and although much could be said about this, the level of struggle in Euskal Herria offers good perspectives.

What socialist model is being proposed in the Abertzale Left, beyond participatory democracy?

It seems to me useless to propose models since every nation would have to create its own. History changes, every day we are faced with new emerging elements and, therefore, it would be absurd to start working on an enclosed model. Time will tell us which road to follow; which road to choose. Then we all will be talking about "the Basque model" as well as "the Basque models".

Do you think that Herri Batasuna (HB) some day will give up its proposal for a participatory democracy in order to, for example, achieve peace or facilitate cooperation with the Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ)?

No. To do that would be nonsense politics because the ideas that unite the people in the Abertzale Left are very sound and, in this sense, there are certain points which we have very clear, among them, a distrust in formal politics. In my opinion, Herri Batasuna has to

work out to the maximum the cooperation with EAJ but using reason, that is, adapting itself to the variable moments and occasions but always without losing its own identity.

Regarding participatory democracy, do you think there are enough possibilities to spread this great idea? Does a majority in the Euskal Herria knows what this concept means?

This is relative. Most media will never help us to spread the idea therefore, it is difficult to reach people massively. In any case, the Abertzale Left learned long time ago that actions are much better than the projection of the ideology; rather than getting lost talking about the ideology. We will continue as we have, since it is our best method of expression. And the political pedagogy cannot be anything but the same. With words and with actions, but specially with actions, we have the lead.

The Basque Conflict And The Political Possibilities For Herri Batasuna

What importance have the relations between Herri Batasuna and the Basque labour unions?

They are very important. Definitely, the political isolation that the Spanish state wants to impose on us has been broken by some specific problems - the prisoners, etc. - and besides this, it is clear that cooperation among leftist organizations is totally necessary in order to challenge an imposing neo-liberalism; all this always within the dynamics of a national struggle. Those relations have to be solid and I am sure that Herri Batasuna would make efforts to move them forward in the right direction.

How would you define the 'third political space', and how would you judge or value this third space?

Oihartzuna: Basque Media Workers Against Dispersion Of Prisoners

Oihartzuna (the Basque word for "echo") is a magazine whose aim is to try and build a bridge between Basque prisoners and the media. This magazine tries to bring media workers closer to the realities of prison life. But not only that; it also endeavours to favour communication between prisoners and journalists, overcoming the heavy mistrust the issue of prisoners stirs up in the media. Oihartzuna also points out and criticises the lack of contrast that so frequently occurs with news about Basque prisoners stemming from official sources; and publishes news that have gone unheeded in some media.

Oihartzuna: <http://www.oihartzuna.net/aldizka/indexen.htm>

In recent years, many people in Euskal Herria have walked away from petty political quarrels and divisions and joined the struggle against specific problems. On the one hand, this. On the other hand, a wide sector emerged with people coming from two sides: there are people in the Basque nationalist left who after many years of struggle have sunk into despair who are nationalist and in the Left and Basque nationalists and left-wingers who have sunk in despair, and also there are many people close to the pact of Ajuria Enea (the anti-terrorism pact of the political parties in Bascongadas) who do not believe anymore in a military solution. In any case, the "third space" appears to be unstructured, but it seems that the majority are nationalists and in the Left and that, therefore, see the necessity to have a political negotiation for overcoming the violent parameters of the conflict.

Do you think unity among the Basque nationalist parties EA, EAJ and HB, and a common line of work, would ever be able to function well?

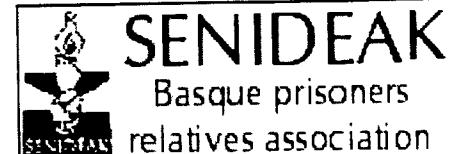
As I said before, we only value actions. Until now, EAJ and EA have not made clear what is that they want. They may say nice things once in a while. But in practice, time after time, they obey Spanish nationalism at different levels which are fundamental to our homeland: Euskara [Basque language], education, infrastructures... When they show more than the will to act, and go from words to action then EAJ and EA will gain, as political parties, legitimacy before the Abertzale Left. Time will tell us.

Do you think Herri Batasuna in the future could reach an agreement with the United Left [Spain's Izquierda Unida] in Euskal Herria so that together could demand the right to self-determination and promote a project of the Left?

Yes, but for this to happen, the United Left would have to keep a more positive attitude regarding the conflict, especially, to be able to join in the construction of the Basque nation from a Basque perspective. So far they have demonstrated their submission to Madrid, ideologically and politically. For the time being, it is very difficult to think of any kind of agreement. But in any case, the Abertzale Left always, and specially now, has called on people who support a negotiated solution to the conflict, to join in and work together for this. The United Left can have its place in this task... but it is in their hands.

Can you imagine the independence of Euskal Herria without Navarre? What do you prefer, independence without Navarre or the unity of Bascongadas and Nafarroa without independence?

It is very, very difficult for me to speak of Basque independence without Nafarroa. In order for this to happen, the Navarrese would have to decide to go by themselves, claiming to



be different from the rest of the Basques and this today is unthinkable since none of us have the right to self-determination. And it is clear that I prefer Euskal Herria totally independent. The other possibilities do not seem to me appropriate.

New Forms Of Struggle And The Future Of Armed Struggle

In many people's opinion, the Abertzale Left cannot achieve victory through ETA's armed struggle, but through sensible and skillful politics. How do you see the future of ETA's armed struggle?

I am not a member of ETA and, therefore, I cannot know the analysis that the organization is making towards the future. In any case, any analyst could see that the military actions of ETA are impregnated with a political content. In fact, it takes responsibility for all of its actions through documents impregnated with politics. And the political credibility that ETA has achieved in Euskal Herria cannot be denied, a fact that is accepted by its most virulent enemy. In facing the future, ETA, in my opinion, should investigate how the politico-military strategy can be understood today by Basque society, beginning with the political line established by the report of the 'KAS Bloke Gidaria' [the coordinator of the Basque national liberation movement]. In any case, ETA, through its Democratic Alternative, made very clear that if the conditions for a truce were given, it would give up armed struggle. And taken into consideration that ETA leaves to the Basque people the final decision in a democratic process, it can be said that ETA will do what Euskal Herria, with words and actions but necessarily in freedom, tells it to do.

Do you think ETA is the most important part of the Abertzale Left?

Historically, the Abertzale Left has been structured around ETA and also, the harshness of the struggle has created very deep affectionate relations with the collective subject that ETA supposedly represents. But the Abertzale Left is much more, much more than ETA, and I am sure that given the moment, ETA would know how to make its contributions through organizations totally political. Being that independence and socialism are the axes of the Abertzale Left movement, the structures of the movement are the instruments. And of course, ETA itself cannot be more than that.

ETA tries to kill its opponents and the Spanish nationalists can ask for "the unity of all democrats against violence" without greater difficulties. Being that money the most important thing (in Spain and in the entire world) why, in your opinion,



has ETA never attacked important economic targets in order to cause the state greater economic losses?

In my opinion, ETA has worked for many years mainly against repression. Along with this, it has hit directly and with great strength the juridical and political structures of the state. Besides that it would be difficult to achieve and maintain an infrastructure capable of creating material losses, in my opinion, ETA has set aside the economy because it thinks it was more important to hit other targets rather than the economy, which is also important may result more abstract to people. Although ETA does not touch economic targets, knowing how important these are, is the result of its own analysis of the process, and perhaps it thinks these are targets for another phase; an interpretation of its politico-military direction.

What can we learn from the Irish peace process, if Basques nationalists want to demand the right to self-determination, and wish to free Euskal Herria from the repressive forces?

There are many things that can be learned but, in summary, I would like to mention the following: first, that armed struggle, along with other forms of struggle, can change the juridical-political structures; second, that a truce is not a condition to begin a process of negotiations; third, that a political agreement on minimum criterion is necessary between the political parties and all Abertzale forces [nationalist forces] to build strength for dealing with the central powers; and finally, to make this brief, that peace can be achieved even when all appears gloomy, as long as there is the will to go for it.

What possibilities do you see for the Abertzale Left if it would make use of new forms of struggle? In the fight for independence and socialism, which new forms of struggle you would like to see are employed?

Without any doubt, what I would like the most is to develop a struggle without bloodshed. You should take into account that the political, cultural, social, economic initiatives and

activities of the Abertzale Left are by far richer than a mere projection of ETA's politico-military activities. In daily life, the Abertzale Left employs a lot of non-violent means of struggle - in the streets, through the institutions, in enterprises and factories... And one also must take into account that we have a great experience in organizing ourselves until we become a driving force within the social dynamics. The Abertzale Left has a great future; until now we practically have not worked on our political project, because what we are proposing and cultivating is the struggle for the fundamental rights of Euskal Herria. Our turn will come when we have achieved the Democratic Alternative.

[Manfred Ostrowski, a German linguist and writer, interviewed Joseba Uranga in Tolosa (Gipuzkoa) this summer.]

Euskal Herria Journal - August 20, 1998

(Source: Euskal Herria Journal - <http://www.freespeech.org/ehj>)

Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)

Communiqué Announcing Ceasefire

By means of this communiqué, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna wants to let the Basque people know about our analysis on the situation and historical moment in our country and the decision we have taken accordingly.

After twenty long years, once again, we have a good chance to take a decisive step in our way towards independence. We firmly believe we now have the same opportunity we had twenty years ago, in the so-called period of "transition", in such a difficult period. But now, our job must be to turn this political stage into the stage of sovereignty. The chance we lost at that time must become true today.

ETA enters into this new stage in a spirit of hope. Hopeful, above all, because we think the mistakes committed in the past will be a good lesson today; hopeful, because we believe the work, experiences and strength gathered for all these years are enough guarantee for this new political stage to succeed.

However, we should not be blinded by this new chance and generated expectations. We should not close our eyes to the alarming situation in the Basque Country. Whichever way one looks at it, the situation in our country is deeply worrying. The two States have always used all their instruments - military, political, economic and cultural - to destroy this nation's resources to be free in the future. As a result of that tenacious initiative of Spain and France, our people have been seriously injured. It will not be easy for us to set free. It is obvious that there is not the slightest movement on the part of the two repressive states. They consider us their enemies instead of neighbours

and prefer to oppress this nation rather than to respect the voice of Basque people in a peaceful way.

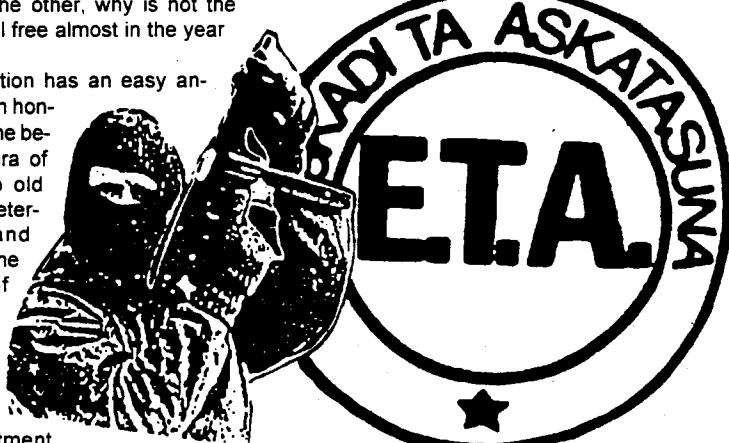
Regardless of the attacks and problems, and led by the determination to fight and survive, the Basque Country is now on the threshold of the 21st century. We are not actually a free country, but we have an extraordinary opportunity to be free in the future. By now, everybody knows we are able to stick to our claims and fight for them. Let's now prove we are able to have our rights, wishes and capacity to organize our home as we want.

Before we go further, we would like to put forward two important questions and to answer them. On the one hand, how can the Basque Country be on the threshold of the 21st century with the chance to become a free country? And on the other, why is not the Basque Country still free almost in the year 2000?

The first question has an easy answer. Easy and even honourable. We are at the beginning of a new era of freedom thanks to old Basque people's determined struggle and chiefly, thanks to the generous work of thousands of brave men and women for the last twenty years.

Their dedication and commitment

remain alive in the hearts and minds of the members of the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna organization. We would not be entering into this new situation without the work of those comrades and citizens who died as a result of the enemies' military attacks; without the suffering of those comrades and citizens who are tortured and constantly humiliated in police stations and quarters, both in Spain and France; without the endeavours of those comrades and citizens who have always rejected foreign Spanish and French laws in force and had carried out a silent, dangerous and committed daily work in favour of our culture, language, financial networks and social customs; without the resistant strength of those humble comrades and citizens who have been and still are lighting the



Basques' way towards freedom from prison cells, full of dignity regardless of the thousands of years prison sentences behind them.

We would like to pay our warmest homage to all those people now, because it is thanks to them that we can experience a hopeful and historical moment at present. We have to thank them for the fact that they have never stopped striving to open all the locks in the huge doors closing our way to freedom. If they had not made a lifetime commitment, the Basque Country would have a much harder task!

The second question, on the contrary, demands a bittersweet answer. In such important moments, it is essential that we evaluate what each one has done. We should thus take into account not only what we have advanced in all these years, but what we could in fact have advanced. The formula proposed by the Basque Nationalist Left twenty years ago, that is, deepening Basque democracy, was not shared by others. Therefore, the Basque nationalists' world split in two: one, those who accepted the law imposed by Spain on us without resistance; two, those who deemed it necessary to break links with Spain and believed that it was legitimate for a Nation to use all means at hand to face imposition and to defend itself.

The first view, supporting the constitutional autonomous system, furthered internal division of a Basque Country just coming out of Franco's dictatorship. In addition to the partition imposed by the two States, then we had a new autonomous division. This first view got the Basque Country "closer to Spain and France", and condemned us to live completely dependent on Madrid and Paris. Instead of making decisions on our own, we have been compelled to ask permission from foreigners, and to fill the cowardly pro-Spanish living in our country with pride. The supporters of the autonomous system strengthened domestic frontiers, promoted clashes among Basque people, and pushed some people - for instance the Basque autonomous policemen or "sepoy" - to accept and defend Spanish law against other citizens' wishes.

Those who made the second choice, regardless of our lack of resources and mistakes, have maintained the project of a united free Basque nation. Confident in our people's capacity to work and create, we have focused on overcoming institutional and statutory divisions, and on bringing peace on the basis of justice and democratic rights for our Country. Thus, our endeavours to shape a Basque social project have seen many gains. The first one, we have succeeded in showing the blindness and futility of the dividing autonomous system. And this is not minimal, taking into account the tremendous efforts of Spain to make this autonomous system become a grave for the Basque Country.

Those who enthusiastically and honestly backed the dividing autonomous system at the outset are now becoming aware of the fact that nothing was moving, up or down, in the steps of autonomy, and that in fact those steps were not taking the Basque Country towards freedom. As far as the supporters of independence are concerned, we are ready to forget

the recent past and to walk together with these people in a new hopeful project.

Why Do We Have A New Extraordinary Opportunity?

As we have already mentioned, the Basque Country is on the threshold of its future. Is it only our aim to believe that we are entering into a "new" situation? Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, after examining the main changes of this situation in depth, presents the assessment upon which its decision is based:

On the one hand, thanks to some Basque people's non-stop struggle, there are new sections of people who now support the option of independence. We think we should explain the changes in the last six years. First of all, we must say it is the generosity of the Basque supporters of independence and their organized struggle within society that have brought about this "improved situation". In view of our final goals, the work for all these years is just a small step of our work ahead. Nobody should think that our responsibilities, working methods and others should not be improved. But sometimes, even if the Basque nationalist left does not like eulogy or flattery, it is very healthy to recognize that our work has been productive and that we are on the right path towards freedom.

On the other hand, it was a really important initiative to spread the "Democratic Alternative" in the place of the old "KAS Alternative". By means of this peace proposal, a fundamental conclusive concept has been spread in society for the last three years: Basque people must have a say, regain a voice, and have their opinions respected. Once again, we have been able to spread the view that the root of the conflict between the Basque Country and the Spanish and French States is political. We have put under question the "democratic" legitimacy of the Spanish and French authorities and we have sowed our kitchen garden with a positive concept: Basque democracy. There are some democratic principles that any democrat should defend: Self-determination and land unity. These principles are stronger now. More people think now that after entering into democratic situation, everybody would be in a position of equality to defend their own project. And the Basque nationalist left is ready to put their political and social project into practice.

The institutional structures imposed on us by the two oppressing States has always been an obstacle in our way towards freedom. One of the changes of the new situation is that more people now begin to realize that those structures have failed. The Basque institutional framework in force is drained. The Spanish and French imperialists are now the only supporters of the present institutional "status quo". The Statute of Madrid, the Navarrese Foral Law and the lack of institutions in the Northern Basque Country (under French jurisdiction) cannot meet the needs and wishes of the Basques. Today, those who believed in the



potentiality of current institutional structures now accept that freedom cannot be achieved in this way, and thus agree with the view always defended by the Basque nationalist left alone. For the first time, we have a true chance to find a solution for the Basque Country.

In addition to the institutional failure, the "Pacts' policy" is also drained. This policy was enforced by the Spanish to distort the truth of the Basque political and social situation, and to destroy the project of independence. The only thing these Pacts brought about for the Basque Country, if any, was more and more suffering.

The supporters of the autonomous system (the EA and PNV nationalist parties, ELA trade union and many honest supporters of independence) have become aware of the fact that this autonomous way is no longer valid. Now, they seem to be determined to start a new way. They have finally decided to leave the Spanish Way of the Cross and take the road of the Basque Country, to support the Basque Country bravely, by breaking with the Spanish imposition and ties. Spain/France or the Basque Country, that's the question. And at least in words, they show a clear determination to work for the Basque Country. At this new crossroads, we all have to act bravely and coherently in this historical moment.

The Spanish and French powers that be have no half-way political alternatives. Not at least, without the help of such parties as the PNV and EA. There is no way in between: past-present "dividing autonomous system" or tomorrow's Sovereignty based on Self-determination and Land Unity. All they could do is, for example, to present another trifling pseudo-offer to avoid a real solution, for instance, for another twenty years. But as we have already said, this half-way solution would need the help of the EA and PNV.

"Europe" is being built as a political, social and economic structure, with power to take decisions regarding the most important issues, consulting Madrid and Paris, but getting further from the Spanish and French state-structures. If we had no effective project of independence or if we had no alternative or resources to face the huge international cultural and economic project of the "union", the Basque Country could be even more dependent and shattered.

Finally, most Basque people now share the view that it is urgent to find a solution for the conflict, and that this solution must be necessarily political. Basques' wish to achieve



peace, a solution, dialogue, talks, with or without ETA's operations, is actually news. It has nothing to do with the former "aseptic claim of peace". It is widely shared that a factual political solution should result from talks. It is not only that it is impossible to "end" with the ETA; above all, Basque people have succeeded in showing that the root of the problem is political, in designing new ways of struggle and firmly saying "stop!" to the attacks against the Basque Country.

In brief, this is the situation in our country: there are two clearly opposite projects concerning our nation. First, the plan to build the Basque Country. It is possible to get a fairer society and people must fight for it. Second, the plan to go on with the process of integration, swallowing cultural impoverishment started by Spain and France many long centuries ago. According to this plan, the Basque Country is just a region without personality in the world. There are clashes in the Basque Country regarding language, education, different views of approaching reality, or building a socio-economic network through labour relations. There is nothing new about these clashes. The only change is that there is a new chance to take definitive steps; there is a new situation brought about by the co-relation of forces.

And that is in fact our challenge in this historical moment: how to set the Basque project in motion all together. If there is goodwill and honesty on the part of Basque political party leaders, there is enough strength and imagination in this nation to keep on going.

What Will Basque Forces Do?

Once again, let's bear in mind that the Basque Country is on the threshold of its future. We approach this historical situation in a spirit of hope, aware of the alarming situation here and deeply worried. The key to resolve our future depends on the yes/no answers to a significative question.

What are the Basque nationalists going to do? Taking into account our recent history, we must think about this question in depth. As a matter of fact, twenty years ago, the other Basque parties yielded to Spanish State's desires. Their excuse was that they were afraid of the "sound of the swords", as they told us. Thus, the Spanish authorities decided in Moncloa and Zarzuela to the further partition of our Country, and to keep on denying our right to self-determination by arms. From then on, the Basque nationalist left has never stopped coherently defending Basque sovereignty, even if they had to pay for it with suffering. Meanwhile, the other forces came to become part of the progressively stronger network.

Anyway, we look ahead with hope again. There is a clear difference between little and rotten fruits collected in twenty years and the sunrays in the path towards freedom. These years have been long, but it is very pleasant to see that others also come to realize the right way to achieve independence. Future freedom will always be better than present submission.

This does not mean that our way ahead is not difficult or risky. Our challenge demands

that all the supporters of independence, leftists and democrats, must act honestly and honourably against Spanish and French blindness and narrow-mindedness.

Our objective is ambitious. Then, the Basque nationalist left should not work alone to achieve it. However, if that would be the case, we ourselves would go on fighting as happy and determined as before, following the way started by thousands of Basque citizens and fighters.

Our Challenges Ahead

As we have already said at the beginning of this communiqué, this is the main challenge and core of this political stage: the Basque Country, as a whole, must be free, by overcoming its autonomous and state borders. We must set the grounds for the future. We are not in the same place now. We should not only regain the chance we lost twenty years ago, but we must take a more important step: we must set the pillars for the future Basque Country. Our challenge is to clearly define the place where we will build our house. Because there are not two or three Basque Countries. There is only one, full of different features and realities - linguistic, social, economic and regarding customs. That's a country in fact!

Never forgetting differences among Basque nationalists, democrats, and progressive people, we must lead the work to build a new political framework including all the provinces of the Basque Country. And in this leading work, all the Basque people have a place, a say and a task.

Achievement of Basque sovereignty clashes with Spanish and French biased and party interests. All the meeting places and pacts to collaborate with Spain must end, that is, it must be the end for secret dirty deals to keep our nation economically dependent.

Our first task is to start "thinking" as a Country. All together. And to honestly analyze our actual economic, linguistic, cultural and social situation in our country. Afterwards, we must promote global projects taking into account all the Basque Country, regarding linguistic rights, land organization, economic development or social rights. The forces in favour of a free Basque Country must reach agreements on fundamental principles.

At the same time, it is everyone's task to confront those who are and will always be enemies of our project. At the outset of this communiqué, we have said we cannot close our eyes to the Basque current situation. In the Basque Country, many people live in a "situation of emergency". The Spanish and French seem to be against a given political option, but as a matter of fact it is the future of the Basque Country which is endangered. If we foster a project all together, it is obvious that Spain and France will react against it and that we will have to suffer its consequences. With no doubt. We will have to be ready for that. We will have to be brave to say that all the foreign political forces are not needed in our country, and we will have to carry out all the big and small actions to get them out from here. Time has come then, not only to criticize our actions, good or

bad, but to note what we have not done but must do.

What ETA's Step Is Not

Before we present our decision and make a specific call, we deem it necessary to specify what this new political stage ahead is not due to the confusion provoked by speculation, expectations and statements in these days. Professional politicians should not deceive people with their plays on words.

We must say we do not agree with the "pacification" proposed by Ardanza in his biased scheme, after he has defended coming closer to Spain for ten long years. Furthermore, we do not want to "ease our minds" or deceive ourselves by giving that "pacification" a political "shape". This moment requires a braver behaviour. We are entering into a completely new situation.

Euskadi Ta Askatasuna is about to give a significant step. Some will try to fool Basque people by relating this step to "normalization", to the strengthening of the present framework, to the offer of a false peace with no changes. These are not but lies. There have been many other lies, for instance, that the ETA deals with the Basque problem by fighting the enemy with the armed struggle. This is not the core of the problem. The key is that Peace will only be achieved when the rights of the Basque Country are recognized. This is the reason, root and key of the current conflict: rights are denied to the Basque Country. We cannot take decisions on how we want to organize our nation on our own.

ETA has taken its main step. It is the others' turn to fill this gap, and in a brave and dignified way indeed. As we have said, it is not time for doubts, selfish decisions or vested interests: it is actually the Basque Country that we can win.

Announcement

Bearing in mind the aforesaid argumentations, ETA - Basque socialist revolutionary organization for national liberation, publicly announces the following to the Basque people and in general, to the international public opinion:

1. Building the Basque Country requires everybody's work. However, it was the Basque nationalist left alone who resolutely undertook that job. It has been a long, complicated and winding road for us. In return, repression and all sort of attacks. Anyway, thanks to our endeavours, today, we can say there is an unprecedented opportunity to create new meeting places and settlements, so as to work together and share efforts and responsibilities in the way towards independence. ETA, for its part, wants to make it clear that it is determined to foster agreement and that it expects such great steps are also taken on the part of the other parties involved.

2. Therefore, ETA publicly calls on political parties, trade unions, cultural representatives, social groups and on all the Basque people in general to make this new political stage be-



come that of sovereignty, to take on definitive commitments and specific steps.

3. Our main goal is related to the current institutional and state partition. We must start to look for solutions to overcome it; to that end, we must start taking steps now to create one sovereign institutional structure including Araba, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, Lapurdi, Nafarroa and Zuberoa.

4. If all the political and social forces sharing this goal come together, in order to achieve the institutional structure we want, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna publicly commits itself to welcome, protect and promote every initiative to overcome current institutional and statute partition. But at the same time, we ask the others to take the same commitment, endeavour and work, even if they were uninterested or cowardly as regards this claim before.

5. The forces supporting democratic rights and construction of the Basque Country must pro-

mote dynamics and agreements around fundamental and basic claims.

6. The project supported by the Basque Country and by Spain or France are completely opposite. A long-standing conflict has clearly shown us that there is no room for half-way solutions. The point is whether to go on living as Basques or to be eliminated by Spain and France. Thus, we deem it essential to call on all those people who agree with the points above. We suggest they should get away from ties and agreements defended and promoted by the repressive Spain and France. It is high time that we all openly and completely undertake the fight for freedom. It is high time that we all destroy the links and agreements with political forces which aim to destroy the Basque Country. Hence, it is high time that we all abandon settlements promoted by political parties, institutional structures and repression to favour the construction of Spain and France and the destruction of the Basque Country.

7. Taking into account the situation of the Basque Country, as well as the present opportunity and longing for freedom, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna announces an indefinite complete cessation of military operations. ETA's actions will be limited to providing ourselves with supplies, to maintain our structures and to defend ourselves in hypothetical confrontations. This complete ceasefire will start on September 18, 1998.

8. The aim of the Basques is to have the Basque Country's reality, rights and free decisions respected. The aim and wish of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna is that Basque people face up to their responsibilities and achieve independence for the Basque Country. We really hope the Basque people's answer will be as significant as the step we have taken. Finally, we want to let everybody know that it will be future events and attitudes that will determine whether this ceasefire will last forever or not.

Euskal Herria, September 1998

ETA's Communique Announcing Its Decision To End Its Unilateral Ceasefire

The following text is an unofficial translation from Basque of the ETA communique announcing its decision to end its 14-month ceasefire and to resume its armed struggle. The original text in the Basque language was published in the Basque newspaper Gara on November 28, 1999.

Euskadi Ta Askatasuna's Communique To Euskal Herria

Euskadi Ta Askatasuna wants to tell the Basque people its opinion and decision. Given the seriousness of this decision we will attempt to explain as briefly and clearly as possible the reasons which made possible to begin the political process.

In September last year, the mechanisms used by Spain and France to place obstacles to our freedom failed, and Euskal Herria was on the eve of a new situation:

The Moncloa Statute [Baskongadak's statute of autonomy] and Nafarroa's special laws did not satisfy the desire of the Basque people for freedom; at the same time, a desire for institutional recognition was present in Lapurdi, Baxenafarroa and Zuberoa.

The strategy of crushing us failed: the pro-independence Abertzale Left maintained its option for a free Euskal Herria, in spite of the repression exercised against its political force: the politico-military boards of Madrid, Ajuria Enea [in Baskongadak], and Irune [in Nafarroa] did not offer alternatives to the Democratic Alternative of the Abertzale Left.

A desire for peace based on a political solution was present in Basque society.

And finally, the various [Basque national-

ist] political forces (PNV, EA, ELA) who in 20 years were satisfied with the little bit agreed by Spain and France, and collaborated with them, started to show a desire for changing the situation.

That is, we think that the option to replace the old politico-juridical framework designed during the reform of the dictatorship and in existence for the last 20 very long years, and the decision to take steps in favor of a new politico-juridical framework based on a democratic option for Euskal Herria, is ripe.

This context made possible for Euskadi Ta Askatasuna to propose an agreement to the PNV and EA in the summer of 1998.

According to this agreement, the signatories [PNV, EA, ETA] agreed to take steps that would bear fruit in support of a sovereign and unique institution comprising the entire Euskal Herria. In this sense, they agreed to seek some minimum points that would support the rights and interests of Euskal Herria and the basic needs and interests of the Basque people.

On the other hand, PNV and EA agreed to break off relations with Spanish political forces against Euskal Herria; and Euskadi Ta Askatasunak would announce an indefinite interruption of its actions. This was a secret accord that set a trial period of four months.

PNV and EA accepted and signed the accord. Taking their signatures as the starting point, ETA guided the initiative in effect during this year.

The maximum qualities of the Initiative are:

- a new hope and energy emerged in Basque society.

- the Accord signed in Lizarra on the 12th of September [1998] by political, social, and labor union forces, identified the political root of the conflict between Euskal Herria and Spain/France, and proposed a methodology entirely democratic for its solution.

- the creation of the first national institution of modern times comprising the entire Euskal Herria.

That is, to manifest the political nature of the conflict and to design its solution, by activating the various forces in Basque society.

During the first months of the Initiative, a basic change in the political situation took place. But after four months, things started to change, and the Initiative was facing an impasse. In our opinion, the reasons for this change are as follows:

- the political tempest after the good results achieved by the abertzale left [Euskal Herriarrok] in the October [municipal] elections, and the first meeting of Udabiltza [national Basque assembly] highlighting the viability of the Initiative, turned on the red light of the Spanish and the French governments who then tried to stop the process with a repressive reaction: detentions, torture, and the murder of [ETA] fighter Ttoto.

- the strategy of the PNV and EA highlighted the parties' interests in the June [regional] elections.

Spain's pressure on the PNV and EA attempted to change the nature of the Initiative:



They tried to turn a process of nation-building into a peace process without content, and to drown the abertzale left in the political "normality," with the obstinate and evil intention of turning the "provisional" interruption of ETA's actions into "permanent" and "irreversible."

During last summer it was noted that the process was blocked and poisoned.

ETA had, and still has, the firm intention of taking this process to the end when it started out the Initiative last year. Therefore, we proceeded to indentify the difficulties and problems of the Initiative:

- on the one hand, the secret nature of the [PNV, EA, ETA] accord generated confusion with its content and the function of the Lizarra-Garazi Accord, and at the same time it had a negative identification.

- and as we stated already, the attempt to distort the content of what was signed by the PNV and EA, and to present the process of nation-building to the Basque people as a "peace process" for the disactivation of the mechanisms of the struggle, used in the defense of the abertzale left.

In ETA's opinion, this attempt was manifested in the lack of will by those participating in the process to bring the critical mass in Euskal Herria to a democratic situation and to activate all the forces.

We made an analysis of the process and saw that the accord signed in the summer of 1998 has not been implemented (in respect to the concrete steps to be taken, and to breaking off relations with the Spanish political forces), and deliberated over the interruption of actions

that we proposed in September 1998; and [ETA] told this to the PNV and EA in the summer of 1999, already four months ago.

It was made clear that the process was facing an impasse, but no effective political proposal was made. PNV and EA gave importance to the current framework, sticking to the Moncloa statute, and not to the initiatives for a new politico-judicial framework.

Seeing that there was no political proposal or concrete strategy at a time in which the future of Euskal Herria was on the table, ETA highlighted the need for political proposals, and came up with one.

Briefly, this is ETA's political proposal: that the people of Araba, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, Lapurdi, Nafarroa and Zuberoa choose freely and democratically a sovereign constitutional parliament in one unique circumscription encompassing all Euskal Herria. That is, that the vote cast by each Basque citizen ought to count the same value in all of Euskal Herria.

In this context, and considering the strength and stability of the various institutions that would emerge from this constitutional process, ETA would make the decision to end its armed struggle, used in the defense of the rights of Euskal Herria.

Many of the political, social, and labor union forces in Euskal Herria know this proposal. Moreover, the police have had the texts of ETA's debates, which were given to the media and the leadership of the political parties. Thus, ETA proposed to the PNV and EA to reach a new accord based in this democratic proposal. PNV and EA have not yet given a concrete response.

Euskal Herria has made some progress walking the road to freedom. As always, the

key to that progress has been the struggle, the quiet work, and facing up oppression with all the means we have.

However, during this last year, the abertzales [Basque nationalists] are again talking and working together and we must continue to do it but, in the meantime, Spain and France continue with their occupation, attacks, and repressive dominance; and the forces in Euskal Herria are not sufficiently activated to face that attack and to continue walking the road to nation-building.

Therefore, the process that started last year is blocked and poisoned, and in that context, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna has made the decision to reactivate its armed struggle given its compromise on the defence of Euskal Herria.

More concrete initiatives are needed, as well as more strength, to end the process initiated last year; and we call on the Basque people to continue their work of nation-building, facing up the enemy and re-enforcing the basic pillars of our nation.

The ceasefire that was in effect since September 18, 1998, is over.

Beginning on December 3, 1999, it will be up to Euskadi Ta Askatasuna to inform its operational commandos when to start to carry out actions.

**Long Live the Basque Country!
Long Live a Socialist Basque Country!**

Euskal Herria, November 1999
Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)

(Source: Translation by Olatz Arkauz for Euskal Herria Journal <<http://www.freespeech.org/ehj>>)

Interview With Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)

"At The End Of This Process, The Basque People Will Have Our Own Constitution"

Comments On The Current Political Moment (May 16, 1999)

In this interview between ETA and two Basque newspapers' editors, the Basque organisation explains its reasons for the cease-fire, the current political moment and future expectations.

The Spanish Government has often said that ETA announced a cease-fire because of social pressures and its own weakness, so this initiative has even been regarded as a "trick-ceasefire". What are the reasons for the open-ended cease-fire?

ETA's cease-fire stemmed from a political evaluation of the situation. At that time, conditions in the Basque Country seemed able to bring about a new political scenario. On the one hand, the Basque nationalist left had long claimed that the judicial-political framework in force was a failure and then, other parties and social sections agreed on that view. The Statute was no longer a means to meet our people's demands or to stop our longing for free-

dom. On the other hand, thanks to the Basque nationalist left's work, Basque people had accepted the idea that the conflict should be resolved democratically, by providing Basque people with the floor. The conflict wasn't to be resolved by security solutions but by solutions based on democratic grounds. The forces that had supported the Statutes of Autonomy before then changed their mind; the Ireland Forum - created by the former imprisoned HB National Executive - was then working out and developing a new social political communication network. All these aspects made ETA's initiative possible.

The PP [Partido Popular, Spain's right-wing ruling party -ed.] Government, on the contrary, was blind to this fact and still sought a political and military victory over the Basque independence fighters. Spanish authorities expelled ETA's official spokespersons from Spain, imprisoned the National Executive, carried out an operation against Basque militants who were said to belong to an unlawful financial network, closed down Egin [Basque nationalist daily newspaper -ed.], etc. Just from the electoral point of view, this Government was sure that

the "Basque problem" could be resolved that way. The announcement of the cease-fire took the Spanish Government by surprise and now, their reaction to the cease-fire is becoming a trap for themselves.

In the year 1992, ETA was for direct negotiation with the Spanish state, with ETA being a direct party to the process. Is there a change of strategy?

In the last few years, our strategy has been clarified rather than changed. The Basque nationalist left's strategy was to subordinate talks between ETA and the Spanish State. While waiting for negotiation, we left aside the job of building our nation, and we had a position of resistance. It's this position that has changed: from being on the defensive, we took to the work of construction. We've made no change in our way of thinking or methods, and we're still active in looking for new sections out of the Basque nationalist left to work with us.

ETA has always intended to resolve the conflict through negotiation, because dialogue between rivals is the most simple way to



overcome a conflict. However, after 1989, the Basque nationalist left reached a dangerous impasse, waiting for a solution which was thought to be close but was coming behind time. Meanwhile, we were not setting the necessary grounds to build a country (regarding socio-economics, Basque language, education, land structuring, etc).

Once we realised what we were doing, the Basque nationalist left started to look for new forces and to work for national construction. If, now, the Spanish State came to be for a negotiated solution, we would be ready for it, but not waiting for it. The Basque nationalist left does not wait any more but takes the initiative now, activating its social and militant network at all levels.

Since the cease-fire was announced, ETA no longer addresses the Spanish Government but the Basque people. Why?

Because ETA's initiative is thought to be for the Basque people. In our opinion, the situation is promising and the people are now strong enough to achieve sovereignty.

Before the cease-fire, ETA evaluated and reflected on the situation. Do you think there was consensus among the members of the Basque nationalist left then?

We think there was more than consensus. We see that the Basque nationalist left is active, ready to fight, mature enough to understand the current situation and determined to undertake the necessary work. The Basque nationalist left's determination and consensus have always been the best guarantee to trigger this process, and to follow it through to the end, because this group is a political force shaped by twenty years' work and enriched by far-reaching experience.

Who's the one who's taken more steps in this process?

From the outset, it's clearly been the Basque nationalist left, always moving forward. There's some controversy on who has moved and who hasn't. What people perceive is that we all have done something, and we agree on that. However, what is important is the direction of that movement. For years, the PNV [mainstream nationalist Basque party - ed.] has moved in the wrong direction, towards a blind alley, in the wrong way to safeguard the construction of the Basque Country. Because as they defended the Statute of Autonomy, the point was not how it should have been implemented, but whether that Basque Country could be free in that way. The Basque nationalist left thought the Statute was taking us down a blind alley. Twenty years later, the Statute hasn't been implemented, and furthermore, our land division is now deeper. The PNV maintains that the Basque nationalist left has come down to the "democratic valley". We think that all the people must come to this democratic valley. Even the PNV, now immersed in the dirty sewers of the Spanish State, working for Spain. We all must

meet in this democratic valley: the PNV, the Basque nationalist left, and the rest of Basque people and forces, because it's there that general consensus must be reached.

Although ETA announced a cease-fire, the Spanish and French governments still act against ETA. What does an inactive organisation think about these attacks?

There are two different points of view. On the one hand, as an organisation, in spite of these governments' blows, we find that the process is well-conducted. But on the other hand, the organisation is made up of people, and there are very terrible situations, very disappointing and enraged actions, which are in fact aimed at blowing the process up. We must also say this: Madrid maintains its war strategy, using different means, which are sometimes apparently legal or even out of their own laws.

Take the example of our comrade, Totto. The Spanish military forces have never given up war, and thus, we can't say this murder took us by surprise. Killing Basque militants is commonplace for them. We must bear in mind that the Civil Guards are still doing their job in the Basque Country. Therefore, we must respond to these actions, and also, prevent them, so we must get the Spanish military forces out of the Basque Country as soon as possible.

Totto's killing had a forceful response and, when looking ahead, something should be done to avoid these kind of actions happening in the future. If Geresta's killing was just regarded as "another activist killing himself", the Spanish State could do whatever they liked in the future.

And again, we want to pay our tribute to Joselu Geresta, as he committed himself, as militant and person, to Euskadi Ta Askatasuna and to the Basque Country. And although we grieve for him, we proudly accept all he gave us.

After the last raids in Paris and San Sebastian, police breaking into HB offices, Geresta killed, etc. What does ETA think about the political answer given by the Lizarra-Garazi groups with the demonstration on April 10th and the hour stoppage on April 12th?

These military attacks by the governments in Paris and Madrid are not considered attacks against the ETA but against the process, that is, against the Basque Country. We're not to measure whether this response was enough or should have been bigger. Basque people have clearly understood the underlying problem, and we must be happy about that. If these attacks had been regarded as a problem of ETA, it was ETA who should have responded; but it was considered an attack against the process and the Basque Country, so it is the Basque people as a whole who responded.

PP and PSOE insist on the fact that ETA's cease-fire is a tactical decision, some "military holiday" taken by the organisation. If the process in course failed, would ETA break the cease-fire and take to arms again?

It would be good for all if it was the PP and PSOE who took a "military holiday", even if it was a tactical decision. The process would then be enhanced. ETA encouraged the process because the situation was thought to be objectively good enough to achieve democratic goals. If this process was hindered in such a way that there was no chance to go ahead, it wouldn't only be ETA's job to analyze the situation, but all the forces in the process should evaluate it and reach conclusions. If the process was so seriously attacked that it was clear there was no way ahead and that we were at another political stage, ETA would make a decision then. And it's likely that other social and political agencies would make their own decisions too.

The HB National Executive is in prison for spreading the Democratic Alternative. What does ETA think about the trial at the Supreme Court?

The members of the National Executive are not in jail for spreading a recording of the Democratic Alternative. They're in prison because they worked for the Basque Country and specifically, for this process to take place. This is something the Spanish know very well. They found that the work of the National Executive was dangerous and decided to get them out of their way. This is the result: these HB members worked as Basque citizens on behalf of freedom, just like other Basque citizens work at other levels, and that's the reason why they're in prison now. We do not make any differentiation amongst the prisoners.

Anyway, the work carried out by the imprisoned National Executive is related to the current situation. The National Executive and all the members in HB worked to bring about this process. After them, other militants - top and bottom HB members - took on this responsibility, when many steps had been already taken, and they promoted the process and got substantial achievements. HB members then and now are doing good work. We want to underline that: previous work set the grounds, and present work is making the process move forward.

The Spanish government has taken no steps after the announcement of cease-fire, and repeats that ETA has appointed no official spokesperson. What does ETA expect from the Spanish government? What should be first done to overcome this situation?

ETA has always had representatives, we've got them now and we will have them in the future. ETA hasn't been waiting for a statement from the Spanish government to appoint their representatives and official spokespersons. On the other hand, the President of the Spanish Government has publicly stated he is ready to talk with ETA. Regardless of his aims, this

is something ETA takes into account.

The process we started in September does not address the Spanish government; however, the Spanish government may feel compelled to say something in this regard, probably due to other states' pressures. But, basically, the Spanish government hasn't changed its attitude. Their job shouldn't be making gestures either; if they truly wanted to embark in a process of talks, they should build the architecture required to resolve the conflict. The problem is not whether ETA appoints official spokespeople or not. The point is to reflect on what kind of process they want to resolve the conflict.

Already in 1995, when the Democratic Alternative was spread, we set forth our proposal to overcome the armed conflict with Spain. This proposal specified what the Spanish and French States should do regarding the Basque Country: to recognise the right to self-determination and to respect the decisions made by Basque people after a democratic public debate. Today, there's a democratic debate going on, or if you want, there's a process of national construction. Thus, if the Spanish government wants to talk with ETA, based on the respect for this process, it's clear that ETA will talk with the Spanish government, to remove obstacles and encourage this process. If these talks took place at this very moment, that much better.

Has ETA had any relation with the Spanish government after the cease-fire was announced? ETA has publicly stated that they issued the organisation's "official testimony" to the Spanish government. What are the contents of this report?

These kinds of processes require some sort of discretion. Not excessive secrecy, but discretion indeed. We understand a public debate shouldn't be held between ETA and the Spanish government through the mass media, because discretion is completely necessary to promote these sort of processes. We confirm that there's been a communication, but at this moment, we have no more to say.

Is it possible that the Basque normalisation process ended up without having any contact with the Spanish government?

That could be possible, but we think Spain is a state demanding our land to be part of their territory, and we don't think the Spanish will let our liberation process advance without interfering. Their interference can be positive or negative. We'd like it to be positive. For example, in the Irish process, the British government defends its own interests, but it's involved in the process to keep powers the British deem important. We think the Spanish state will finally do something in our case, because that's the way it must be. When a nation is struggling to get free from a state, there must be contacts or talks.

On the other hand, we find these talks are global and the Lizarra-Garazi groups should play a leading role. Thus, Lizarra-Garazi must

be a framework of loyalty and commitment.

The Spanish Government uses prisoners as a means for pressure. What are the effects of this attitude?

The Spanish government uses dispersion as pressure and blackmail. But the Basque people have declared ourselves in favour of having our prisoners back in the Basque Country. The Spanish government doesn't respect this opinion, which is a bad example for the future. The Basque people have expressed our opinion and this opinion is not respected. Therefore, the Basque people will have to make the Spanish government respect it. If this government doesn't respect our decisions, will our people's decisions be respected concerning other significant issues? The point is not that they don't enforce their own laws. The point is that the Basque people have stated what we think regarding a given issue, and this opinion isn't respected. That's the nub of the matter indeed.

In previous communiqus, ETA has called upon the Basque people to work for prisoners and victims of reprisal. How does ETA evaluate recent protests?

Initiatives to have our prisoners back in the Basque Country began in 1996: the prisoners' struggle, ETA's actions, people demanding that the Spanish government should not use prisoners of war as a means for confrontation, and no more actions on the prison front. Since then, our evaluation is positive. Throughout all these years, prisoners and their relatives have been suffering in private, and now, this suffering has spread. Most people think now that this issue needs to be resolved. However, we must succeed in bringing prisoners back to the Basque Country. It's the Basque people's job to reflect on the current situation and find initiatives to succeed. The point is not what kind of protest we need to make, or what kind of social agreement is reached to make a protest, but how we all design the strategy to make this desire become true. It's many people's responsibility; it's not only ETA's business.

The issue of prisoners is painful and urgent. However, and bearing in mind how cruel it is, does ETA consider that this issue must be understood in the context of a wider political process? Or in other words, the political process is the important thing and the issue of prisoners must be resolved as far as this process goes on?

We'd rather ask this question of the Basque people. Is it possible that a process of construction, liberation, normalization - or whatever name is given - goes on when the Basque people have given our opinion and this opinion is not respected? Then, this issue is important according to the answer. The Basque people must succeed in bringing the prisoners back to the Basque Country, but this goal must not block other building initiatives. The prisoners must be

taken into account, but must not stop other initiatives. This issue is in the Basque people's agenda and a strategy must be designed to have our prisoners back. It's actually the Basque people who must make the effort.

Does ETA think that the Spanish government members all agree on how to deal with the conflict, or as it is widely shared, there are different opinions within it?

What we know is Spanish government's actions. Rumours created by political experts are not very important to us. What concerns us is what the Spanish government does.

What's the role of the French government, according to ETA?

As far as repression is concerned, there's been no change. However, there's a new thing: the French government has now the Basque problem in their agenda. Up until now, it was much easier for them to use the Basque conflict for their business. They thought this political problem wasn't so terrible in the land under their jurisdiction. Today, the "Basque problem" doesn't only concern the Ministers of the Interior and Justice, but the whole government. "We'll take steps as far as Spain does", they say, as if it was a Spanish problem; but at present, it's obvious that the French think there's a problem in the Basque Country and that the Basque people agree on that. This is the result of the Basque nationalist people's fight, because our concerns and claims have touched society and because a large movement has been created. The clearest example is that the attitude in favour of a Basque single "department" - for the provinces under French jurisdiction - is increasing.

In the communique on February 24th this year, ETA welcomed the "brave attitude" of the PNV, HB, AB and EA. Recently, some PNV members expressed a different point of view. Are these statements simple inner contradictions or are they part of the PNV game? Can these kinds of opinions put the development of Lizarra-Garazi at risk?

Lizarra-Garazi isn't a simple settlement among parties, it's something more. It's a framework to overcome the conflict, laying the foundations to tackle a democratic process in the Basque Country. It's the contents of this settlement that really matter, and that can't be subject to the mood-swings of a political party.

Some people think Lizarra-Garazi is drained. Ibarretxe (President of the Basque Autonomous Government) seeks a new forum, and the Izquierda Unida (IU) has proposed two parallel and coordinated forums in the Basque Autonomous Community and Navarre. What do you think about these initiatives? Should Lizarra-Garazi be developed?

It's clear that Basque public life is much



faster now. It took ten years for the parties at the Ajuria Enea Table to realise that that settlement was drained, and then, ten days were enough to despise the potential off this agreement. Lizarra-Garazi is a settlement to be developed, in different stages. We must look at its contents; this is what must be respected, because it's a democratic option. The Ajuria Enea Pact was an instrument for war. The Lizarra-Garazi agreement, on the contrary, makes an appraisal of the conflict in the Basque Country, a general assessment, taking Basque Country as a whole. It also presents a method to resolve this conflict. Taking Lizarra-Garazi as a starting point, we must build political, social, labour and institutional scopes of action. Always bearing in mind its contents and implementing the settlement according to them.

Is Lizarra-Garazi the only possible option to safeguard the future of the Basque Country?

Lizarra-Garazi must not be neither a new symbol nor a means for confrontation. Lizarra-Garazi is an instrument for integration. The problem needs a global answer, and that's the potentiality of Lizarra-Garazi. The proposal made by the IU, regarding two forums, is a partial answer. If more than one forum was necessary, we should have three: in the Basque Autonomous Community, Navarre and the Northern Basque Country. The problem is global, because we are submitted to the rules of two states, and that needs an answer. It's only one forum that is needed so as to tackle globalness. Two or three forums are partial answers, and thus we should make the same work more than once, making things more complicated than they are now. On the other hand, the members of the forum must take part in it voluntarily, no one can be forced to take part in this forum. The signatories to the Lizarra-Garazi agreement must take into account there are some parties that are not with them. However, bearing in mind that Basque plurality is not represented, they must go on working.



Nevertheless, the parties out of the agreement don't have the power of veto. If they don't get involved in this forum, that's because they don't want to. They have no right to say that nothing can be done "until we sit at the same table with them", and then, they can't say anything when Basque people make our own decisions, arguing that these decisions don't comply with this or that Constitution.

If the process goes on, will it be more easy or more difficult for those who are not involved to come to you?

We are completely sure about that. The faster the process goes on, the sooner will those who are out, join us. And this is not imposition; if they act as Basque citizens, they'll feel tempted to get involved in deciding what kind of country we want to build.

Is there a possibility of social confrontation, for instance, in Navarre?

We think there's no room for social confrontation. There can be such a confrontation among politicians, who use and manipulate the process to end it, but not in society.

The contents of Lizarra-Garazi are now taking shape in talks at the Parliament of Gasteiz. Does this imply that part of the Basque Country is being left behind?

It must be cleared up that what happens in the Parliament of Gasteiz is not implementation of the Lizarra-Garazi Agreement. In Gasteiz, Basque nationalist parties co-operate and talk. For example, the IU, that signed the Lizarra-Garazi settlement, doesn't take part in this co-operation, just like the trade unions and social organisations.

Talks at the Parliament in Gasteiz are being a determining factor in the political life of part of the Basque Country. Can the government agreement be decisive when developing Lizarra-Garazi?

Some parties were for the Statute framework before but consider it drained now. Since September, the hypothesis of building the Basque Country out of the narrow statute framework has become true; in fact, it's a reality. Thus, the goal of the possible government settlement is not enhancing that institution, but benefiting from this framework to work for the national construction process.

But, will it be a decisive factor?

What is decisive is our people's desire and work. There were many theories after ETA announced the cease-fire and the new process started. If, as a result of this settlement, steps are taken for national construction, that means one of the theories worked out in September has become true. This efficient step would show that nationalist forces agree on enhancing the process in general, with eagerness and courage. The settlement in Gasteiz

must be useful to show it.

Have the government settlement and Lizarra-Garazi nothing to do with each other?

If agreement is not reached in the government, Lizarra-Garazi can't be stopped. Lizarra-Garazi is a means to resolve the conflict, and this can't be influenced by anything. The government settlement stands off relations among parties.

The Lizarra-Garazi Declaration is eight months old now. What is ETA's level of confidence and hope about the process?

We see a high level of maturity in the Basque nationalist left, and other political forces facing up to their responsibilities; so we are very confident and hopeful. It's possible, we must say, to bring the process to an end. The Basque people have the chance to be free. The point is for all of us to do our best to make it work. We must all make a great effort, but all together, we'll get it.

Twenty years ago, some nationalists broke away, which was called the Txiberta rupture. Some of them, in the name of pragmatism, got completely involved in the autonomous and statute process; others suggested going against that framework. Twenty years later, there's a new atmosphere of co-operation among nationalists. Does ETA think this process is more mature now than Txiberta was? Is it possible that a common strategy is agreed upon by all nationalists on some points of agreement?

It's true that we see the Basque forces are more and more mature. A few months ago, we had a theory. Now, we see that this theory is giving its results and that we're on the right road. At the crossroads twenty years ago, the choice was nothing or a specific thing, and some went for the cake; today, it's clear that this cake satisfied them but it didn't for our future at all. This is the way we think of maturity: we don't think they'll make the same mistake. Thus, we're convinced the Basque political forces have learnt from experience and they'll go on until the process is ended.

What's ETA's view regarding the Assembly of Basque Local Representatives? Must this Assembly walk hand in hand with Lizarra-Garazi?

Lizarra-Garazi is both the grounds of the process and the means to resolve the conflict. The Assembly of Basque Local Representatives is within the framework of national construction. We can't be waiting for the conflict to end to start building our country. This Assembly is an institution that represents the whole Basque Country, and that is worth it in of itself. The tasks and potentialities of this Assembly will depend on the people taking part in it. The job of this institution, of the Basque people,

is to make it work. To make a real appraisal of the situation and then to work, for the Basque language, socio-economics, education, land structuring, etc. It's crucial to get insight into the situation and put new initiatives in action. Look, for instance, we don't have an Institute of National Statistics; or, as regards the impoverished economic situation of Zuberoa, who gives an answer? Nobody.

ETA has repeated time and again that the Basque people have the floor. What does it really mean? Basque people could make decisions when the Basque Country is not legally recognised?

That's the nub of the matter. Lizarra-Garazi states that this is a political conflict and so it must be resolved by accepting what the Basque people say. However, we have no institutional subject. One of the most important reasons for national construction is precisely to give shape to this subject, that is, build an institutional network. The Assembly of Local Representatives is the first step, although it won't be the only one. Thus, confluence of the Lizarra-Garazi agreement and national construction is something natural. Even more, it's essential.

It's been said that the Assembly of Local Representatives is aimed at replacing the current institutions.

That's not true. The Assembly of Local Representatives is something new, which did not exist before. Therefore, it can't replace anything. This Assembly was made up because there was no institutional structure representing the whole Basque Country. If we go on with this initiative, other institutions will have to be created that logically replace the current ones. There will surely be many questions and proposals.

How must sovereignty be recognised? What would its judicial-legal and constitutional framework be?

It's crucial to see the process as a whole to clear up this question. At the end of this process in course, the Basque people will have our own Constitution; and by the way, it won't take long. We are on the way to getting it. Our Constitution will be worked out by the Basque people, taking the Basque Country as a whole, and will define the framework we want.

But then, should the Spanish and French Constitutions recognise sovereignty?

Recognition of sovereignty is another question, which must be fulfilled by the two states. At some point of the process, France and Spain will have to get involved, and then we'll see how they do it. Anyway, that's not our main concern. We're not going to wait a minute to speculate on how their constitutions recognise our independence. The key is to go on building our nation, and that time will arrive, but we can't keep waiting for it, because oth-

erwise, we'll have nothing. We'll go on building our country, so that when that time comes, we're ready for it. Let's guess the right to self-determination is recognised for us today. What would we do then? Our house isn't done yet. Let's build it. We don't want to change the Spanish Constitution. As we have mentioned before, we must work out our own Basque Constitution.

"Land unity" and "recognition of territorial integrity" are two widely used concepts.

These two concepts are mixed. "Recognition" must come from outside and "unity" from inside. How to do it is another thing. We very much tend to import foreign models. We don't find it really important, what is significant for us is the project itself. We should all reflect on the role to play by the six territories in the unity. Our people's Constitution will have to safeguard two elements: first, unity; second, the power to make decisions.

How important are the provinces in institutional organisation?

The territories have been very important in our history; they're deeply rooted and are the basis of institutional organisation. These territories are very old. And now they need an answer. Each province is different and their unity is the cornerstone of national construction. Unity must also be built, taking into account differences in provinces. We can't mix specificity with unity. Specificity must favour unity.

Thus, it can be predicted that the Basque Country will have two institutional structures: the first one, oriented at meeting the needs and projects which concern all of us; and the second one, to guarantee that all the provinces participate and make decisions. However, we'll have less institutions than we've got now, which will be faster, more democratic and efficient. For instance, Nafarroa will feel more comfortable in the Basque Country, because the Basque Country will accept Nafarroa's distinctive features, something that Spain doesn't do and will never do. Nafarroa will have the floor and power to make decisions; in other words, Nafarroa will have more power than it has today. Anyway, this model is to be discussed and shaped by all Basques.

Recently, the map of Europe has changed. There are new countries such as Czechia, Slovenia and Lithuania. Where is the place of the Basque Country today in Europe? Is it worth being in a hurry to join the European community "with the things we already have": three provinces, or only Gipuzkoa, or Bizkaia...

If we joined the European community just with one part of the Basque Country, we'd make the same mistake we did twenty years ago. We have embarked on a new process to make all the parts of our country move at the same time. We must overcome our country's parti-

tion: divided into two different states and in different parts within those states. We must be entitled to self-determination not only in the Basque Autonomous Community, but in the whole Basque Country. So it's clear that we must avoid the risk of moving only with one part of our people.

Do elections on June 13th have a special meaning, if we compare them to previous polls? How can they be decisive?

They're not decisive in of themselves, but, still, it's obvious they can favour or hinder the process in course. From a Basque nationalist point of view, this election will be more positive if groups get more votes that bring a solution to the conflict and national construction.

As in the previous elections in the three western provinces, the pro-Spain groups have presented this electoral appointment as a general election. This view is more stressed now that the process has advanced. The Basque Country has a real challenge ahead with the Assembly of Local Representatives and the new institutional structure stemming from it. The PP, thus, urgently needs to have good results to go on with their war strategy at the institutional level too. The PP and PSOE don't mind what kind of project each town-council has; their campaign is not based on a political programme, but on a strategy of war.

The Basque nationalist forces don't stand for the European elections together...

This fact means we've lost a really good opportunity. In fact, we've lost a chance for all the nationalist forces to get united and show other countries that the Basque Country exists. We've lost the chance to defend our identity in Europe. Nobody is to blame for that. Some nationalist forces refused to accept the offer, and it's only them who know why. Lack of courage, indeed. Perhaps, our enemy's attacks made the political situation too tense... Finally, some forces did not dare, because they thought presenting one single list of candidates was perhaps too much.

Do you ask people to vote for a given option?

Yes. In general, we'd like them to vote for the parties that have shown they are for national construction. But we think the most useful vote is EH, because this force has made it clear what they want, is able to make the process advance and because they defend a Basque nationalist and left project. However, we'd like to underline that we don't do it because it's good for us, but because it's good for all the Basque People.

As regards settlements after the polls, what do you think it will happen if some nationalist forces reached an agreement with Spanish parties - PP or PSOE - "so as to make management easier"?

First of all, we must say we don't think



that will happen. That fact would mean that the nationalist forces were against the process in course. This fact would imply a turning-back on the process. We foresee the nationalists will be together in the years to come and will co-operate in the fight for the rights of the Basque Country. This is what should logically happen. Anyway, we've already said the grounds are set by Lizarra-Garazi to resolve the conflict, and we think other agreements are possible based on these grounds, always taking this settlement as a starting point.

It's possible to be at new situations, and thus, the forces for nationalism and the democratic process can look for new alternatives. However, they should have always the same goal: enhancing the process in course. If CDN, PSE, PSN and other parties showed they were interested in joining this democratic process - if they were ready to accept the Basque people's decisions - we could all possibly reach another kind of settlement, deriving from Lizarra-Garazi. In this way, Navarre would no longer be a branch of the government in Madrid. The basis for future agreements must be the settlement reached by the forces for nationalism and respect for the Basque people's rights. In the Basque Country, there are given rules in the political game, and we must play in accordance with them.

The PP says they can't trust these polls in the same conditions because of the great pressure and threats. What do you think about that?

It's completely false. As a matter of fact, PP and PSOE have the support of about 20,000 votes of Spanish civil guards, judges, civil servants, relatives and so on. 20,000 votes, and in fact, 20,000 armed votes. Besides, they have body guards, five TV channels, most mass media, judges, administration, etc. They just want to play the victims' role. Things would be very different if all the forces stood on a true equal basis.

According to ETA, what's the role of the economic forces?

To begin with, these forces must appraise the situation in the Basque Country, and then, they should set forth specific proposals and solutions.

At the present time, the Basque people have no power to control our economic resources. Although it seems that the economic agreement with Spain provides part of our land with some kind of power, we've actually got no chance to decide on our economic policies from a nationalist point of view. Lack of power has serious consequences for our people; take the example of the serious process of industrial dismantling imposed on us.

If we had power to control our economy, we could take other measures; we could, for instance, diversify industry. We're sure the Basque Country would have a deeper economic development if we were a free nation.

On the other hand, we believe it's high time we improved the social struggle. Thus,

scopes and rules of the social game must be defined in order to determinedly undertake the work for a new model of society. We recently said the Basque land should get rid of the remains to lay new foundations for the future. And one of our main jobs now is to define and create the Basque Scope of Labour Relations, because it'd be a significant step towards a new model of society and will improve the social struggle.

Does ETA consider the role of the mass-media as important to the process?

It's very important indeed. Up until now, the mass media has clearly opted to extend the conflict. The mass media plays a role in the process, namely attacking and spreading black-propaganda. Their main goal is covering the offensive against the Basque Country and, often, promoting it. Things will be more easy or more complicated depending on the role of the mass-media. And as a matter of fact, it is the majority of the mass-media in the Basque Country who adopt this clear attitude against the process.

We don't really know how aware some mass-media and journalists are of the serious consequences their attitude can have in the Basque Country. We aren't sure if they know how responsible they are for the situation here.

What's happened in the last twenty years? Those political forces who call themselves nationalist - and now agree with Lizarra-Garazi - have long used the mass media as loud-speakers, and today this mass-media is against the liberation process, diminishing it or hindering its development. Meanwhile, the communication monsters are growing, and obviously, the result is that the mass-media are now the biggest ones.

Another thing is what to do in the future. As we've said before, we should reflect on that and shape a project for the future. And, now, particularly, it's journalists who should think of that, analysing what kind of mass-media the new Basque Country needs and what rules must thus be agreed upon. What is clear is that the Basque Country needs a national TV, a national radio, etc.

What does ETA think about the work for the recovery of the Basque language?

In general, we find it positive, because Basque is a living language, because it is a means for communication, and because more people use it now in different fields. But, at the same time, the Basque language is considered to be lost in some areas of the Basque Country, by many Basque people. If we are at this point today, that is because Basque people have struggled, even against the administration, which is supposed to defend our language.

Anyway, socio-linguistic statistics confirm the Basque language's situation is critical in many areas. Our language is about to disappear because we have no means to make it survive, and it'll be very difficult to change this situation with our present tools. Then, there's only one way out: we must learn Basque, speak

Basque and get the power to make Basque be the language of the whole Basque Country.

And, besides the Basque language, we would also like to deal with education. Education has always been considered very important when learning Basque, but then, the contents that were taught - through the medium of Basque, and also Spanish and French - have often been left aside. It seems now that people have become aware of that fact, but it's twenty years that we've been learning the Basque Country is not the Basque Country, but Spain or France, in such subjects as history, geography and literature. All the Baques have the right to learn through the medium of Basque, they should also be entitled and obliged to learn Basque history and identity. On the contrary, we'll have people who can speak Basque but who are Spanish or French as far as culture is concerned.

How important is it for ETA to spread the process at the international level?

It's very important. But as you said, it's the process that must be spread. And, that process creates instruments for us to have a voice at the international level or, at least, we'll have the chance to have a say abroad. International community is important in the end. What's crucial now is working at home: awakening inner strength and showing it abroad. If we travel abroad with a weak process, no one will help or pay attention to us.

The message we have to spread at the international level is simple but meaningful: we are a nation, and the present conflict can be democratically resolved, simply by respecting the Basque people's voice. We must stress that fact.

Quebec, Scotland, Ireland, etc. What does ETA think about these processes? Are they models for the Basque Country?

Analysing other processes can help, because we can learn many lessons from them. But, above all, the most important thing for us is these peoples' fight to force the states oppressing them to accept a point of agreement. If, on the contrary, we imported foreign methods, we'd realise that many aspects are missing; we actually have different realities.

Luckily, the former National Executive studied the Irish example and later, the Lizarra-Garazi Forum made a diagnosis to see how this model could be used in the Basque Country. It's not a copy, because our situation and problems are different: we have no armed unionists, but we have the Civil Guard and Gendarmerie. We must get them out of here, we must work out our own institutional structure, etc. The processes in the Basque Country, Ireland or Quebec can't be equally resolved, because the processes are not the same either.

Just like us, the Spanish will also watch conflicts abroad. They will surely look for possible solutions, lessons or measures. And if we all do the right thing, the Basques will finally be free, and the Spanish and French will have a new neighbour. Thus, we'll all be winners.

Herri Batasuna Leaders Freed

In a decision that gets the Spanish government off the hook, Spain's Constitutional Court on Tuesday overturned prison sentences against the leaders of the Basque pro-independence party Herri Batasuna (HB) for "collaborating" with the armed organization Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA - Basque Homeland and Freedom).

After days of deliberation to find a justification to its decision to free the 22 HB leaders - in the least damaging way to the state and the Supreme Court - the court's 12 members ruled eight to four on Tuesday night that Spain's penal code articles under which the 23 HB leaders were tried and sentenced for collaboration with armed groups were unconstitutional.

They raced to thrash out a deal for a sentence which would save Spain from the humiliation of being equated to Turkey by the European Human Rights Court in Strasbourg. Here's the deal: the Constitutional Court agreed not to study other elements of the appeal by the jailed leaders who protested their innocence.

Government spokesman Josep Pique immediately rejected the suggestion that politics played a role in the leaders' imprisonment, insisting the Constitutional Court's decision showed "the rule of law works regardless of who you are".

But in politics, where there is a will there is a way.

In December 1997 the Spanish government imprisoned 23 members of the National Board of the Basque political party Herri Batasuna (HB - People's Unity) for a 7 year jail sentence. Their alleged crime was to disseminate for public debate a video which discussed ETA's peace proposal for a democratic end to the existing conflict.

The Supreme Court failed to prove the participation of each of the 23 politicians in the decision to distribute the video and thus, it vio-

lated the principle of innocence.

International observers from human rights organizations in eleven countries watching the proceedings said the trial was political and arbitrary because organizations in Europe have made similar actions and not prosecuted.

The observers were bothered by the lack of evidence presented by the prosecution. In a joint statement issued during the trial, they said the accused were given the burden of proof which "violates the fundamental principle of the presumption of innocence".

The judges considered that a crime was committed when in fact the video had never been broadcast. Moreover, the judges applied Franco's penal code, which declared the crime of "collaborating with an armed band" as any type of collaboration with the activities and goals of an armed group. It thus criminalizes the role of intermediaries in disseminating negotiating positions or peace proposals in a bitter and long standing conflict.

The guilty verdicts and long sentences were praised by Spain's government and mainstream opposition parties but criticized from inside the Basque Country where even "moderate" Basques termed it politically motivated.

HB attorneys appealed the Supreme Court verdict and warned they would take the case to before the European Human Rights Court.

The release of the imprisoned HB leaders came hours after the Constitutional Court after the Constitutional Court ruling quashed the convictions.

One of them was released last year on health grounds, and the other 22 left prison in the early hours of Wednesday morning after 20 months behind bars.

But Eugenio Aranburu did not survive this latest political persecution of Herri Batasuna leaders. The HB leader was found dead hanging from a tree near his home - a hanging not

unlike the KKK in the U.S.

The body of Eugenio Aranburu was found a few hours before he was to be arrested and taken to Madrid along with the other 23 HB leaders that were prosecuted.

Baiona, Euskal Herria
July 22, 1999

(Source: *Euskal Herria Journal* <<http://www.freespeech.org/ehj>>)

"The Sentence That Imprisoned The National Executive Of Herri Batasuna Was Reversed"

Twenty-one months have passed for 22 Basque people, members of the National Executive of Herri Batasuna, to be released, after an unjust sentence took them to prison for political rather than for legal reasons. Regardless of the legal disguise of this sentence, 22 men and women were imprisoned because they tried to distribute the peace proposal known as the "Democratic Alternative".

The trial itself was just the logic and predictable staging of the Partido Popular and the Spanish Government's determination to destroy, no matter how, the Basque Nationalist Left. In a context of persecution and annihilation of the Basque dissidents, shaped by the effects of the death of the PP councillor Miguel Angel Blanco Garrido, pressures were permanently exerted on the magistrates of the Supreme Court. The Ministry of the Interior created a climate which favoured and demanded an exemplary sentence, even if it was not in due process of law. The context in which the trial was held, under great mass media and political pressures, came to blur the legal aspect of the proceedings. Then, the speech of the attorney Jose Maria Luzon at the trial, a clear political declaration, showed that it was not only the 23 members of the HB Executive who were sitting on the dock, but also the alternative of future and peace represented by the Basque nationalist left. Besides, the subsequent justice-police actions (i.e. Egin and Egin Irratia were closed down, the ETA leadership was allegedly dismantled, etc.) clearly showed again the Partido Popular's "tough policy" against the Basque people's constant claims for a just and democratic resolution.

Basque Country
July 22, 1999
Herri Batasuna International Dept.

(Source: HB International Department
<kanpo@herri-batasuna.org>)



"Now We Must Find Ways To Be Released..."

Interview With Political Prisoner Helmut Pohl On The Politics Of The Red Army Fraction (RAF)

ATS Note: This interview was conducted in 1996, almost 2 years before the RAF announced its self-dissolution. We are including it here because it provides valuable insight into the break between the RAF prisoners and the RAF itself. Pohl also engages in a wide-ranging discussion about the failings of the RAF throughout the different phases of its history, particularly from the mid-80s onwards.

There was a split between the RAF and many of the prisoners, and now the political prisoners no longer present themselves as a united group. So, for whom are you speaking in this interview?

First of all I'm speaking for myself, but I also know what some of the other prisoners are thinking. We have all been isolated from one another since the 1989 hungerstrike. There was possibility to have an exchange about the new situation. Letters are not an appropriate medium for such a discussion.

Why not?

Our mail has been utilized by the authorities for well over ten years. The BKA [Federal Crime Office] pours over every sentence, trying to analyze the style - that makes discussions impossible. It's just not possible to communicate exclusively by means of such a tedious medium like letters. It's just not an option after years of isolation and the eventual decline of contacts to the outside. But the collective does still exist: We are struggling together for our freedom.

How do you explain the fact that since the 1992 cessation by the RAF, which ended armed attacks against persons, the prisoners group has dissolved and the RAF itself has disappeared from the political scene?

The cessation, at least as we envisioned it, never came about. Our vision of the cessation was meant to stand for a transformation of that which RAF once was into a political force which could influence new political situations. And that didn't happen. All that happened in 1992 was that actions were halted, and everything else just evaporated. The reasons for this lie in the fact that a political discussion about how things should continue on in the future never even got off the ground.

But there have been a series of texts, full of criticisms and self-criticisms of the RAF and the prisoners...

But these papers from the RAF, and the "self-criticism", weren't real critiques. It was just a rehash of the 1980s, putting it through the wash one more time. The so-called "new

politics" of the RAF was just an attempt to make a variant of "revolutionary politics" on top of the old foundation, a reproduction of the same, but this time done the right way, so to speak. But there was never a complete break from the old concept. In line with this, I think it's important for those who are still underground to announce the dissolution of the RAF. Other prisoners expressly told me to say that in this interview. The RAF must be dissolved, then we can see what develops.

How should the discussion have gone, in your opinion?

In order to explain that, we need to look at the history of the cessation discussion. In 1987, the prisoners made mention of a cessation for the first time...

In other words, after the attacks on MTU manager Ernst Zimmermann, Siemens manager Kurt Beckurts, and the diplomat Gerold von Braunmuehl. Was there a connection between these attacks and talk of a cessation?

Thoughts of a cessation had more to do with international developments. By 1987, it was clear to us that things were going to change. That meant, in our opinion, that the entire concept of the RAF up to that point needed to be put in question. But no discussion followed from this analysis, things just got stuck. That criticism is also applies to us, the prisoners: At that time, when it was clear to us that we weren't going to get any further, we should have stated clearly that things can't go on in the same way. But at that time we thought we couldn't push that through. We just didn't have enough fundamental thoughts on this. We, far away in prisons, isolated from one another, weren't in a position to say what it all means and how things should continue. But we should have said something nonetheless. But still, we were some of the few people who had our fingers on the pulse, so to speak.

In the 1989 hungerstrike, we tried once again to introduce a fundamental reorientation. We were pushing for the RAF to stop its actions, then for a political discussion to start, then freedom for the political prisoners.

That was an demand issued internally?

Yes, those were our internal discussions concerning the armed actions.

How, in your opinion, did international developments lead to armed struggle no longer being relevant?

The politics of the RAF are always immediately associated with armed struggle. But it was never supposed to be that way, and the fact that it became that way was a mistake. So the thoughts of a cessation had nothing to do with armed struggle per se. All across the world, a tendency towards marginalization could be seen. One example from our discussions at that time. In Central America, a war of destruction was being waged, but over here it was hardly taken notice of, on the contrary, quite a different image was being portrayed. Here it was assumed that supposedly democratic steps were taking hold there, when in reality entire areas were being destroyed. At the same time, the ruling powers were able to push through nearly all over their projects in Central Europe. Whether it was gene technology, atomic energy, Fortress Europe, or remilitarization, there were qualitative changes taking place. I should mention that all of this became clear to us then, but some non-Europeans said to us that they had been discussing that back in 1980; that says something.

That's why it was of great importance to us that people come together from across the leftist spectrum and discuss things, so as to understand the catastrophic direction things were heading in. It wasn't just our way of making politics which had become outdated, other leftist groups, even bourgeois ones, had failed to find methods of dealing with the new situations.

That means, the decision to halt the attacks which had become characteristic of the RAF was of a fundamental nature. But how does that fit with your statement from 1993, in which you said: "The things I have been saying for the past few years I no longer say now. And the possibilities which the cessation gave rise to are gone. So I'll be damned if I'd ever 'renounce' the armed struggle." That seems more like the hardliner image which the authorities have tried to pin on you.

It was certainly a mistake to formulate my anger in such a way in the concluding paragraph of that statement. But if you read the entire text, which was published in 'die taz', you can easily see the message I was trying to convey: I will not be blackmailed by state propaganda. At that time, the state was demanding that we renounce violence and the politics of the RAF from the very beginning - I am not willing to do that. The cessation was not meant in that way either, rather it was necessary so as to continue political work. When we first started discussing the cessation, people who visited us and the RAF had no idea what it was all about. For example, people kept saying that we had to keep open the option of an attack. Personally, I don't find that to be convincing: If

something is done right in the meantime, then it doesn't matter if "the option to attack is no longer there". But even if people saw things differently, anyway a new form of attack needed to be found. And so some thinking was done at this time - for example, instead of shooting people, high-level acts of sabotage could be carried out. But that never happened either. As for the hardliner stigma: That's got nothing to do with what we prisoners say or do. Until 1991/92, all the prisoners were seen as "hardliners" - despite our attempts to bring about some sort of social discussion. That brings to mind the Vollmer/Kasemann/Waizer Initiative of 1988 [an attempt by the Greens to win amnesty for the prisoners]: We responded to that, not as a tactical manoeuvre, because it was in line with our thoughts of a cessation. But the state prevented this initiative. We were seen as "hardliners" despite our efforts in the hungerstrike of 1989, when we had talks with state authorities and other persons - and despite the fact that everyone knew we wanted something new. At the time, supposed attacks plans attributed to us were discovered and spread in the media. And this continued against the prisoners who were still inside after the cessation, despite our public statement via Irmgard Moeller that we welcomed the halting of attacks. Facts play no role when it comes to the state's smear campaigns.

If you look at things today, you come to the following conclusion: Despite the transformation of the RAF and the necessary political decision with regards to the prisoners, a split developed, attributed to a few of the prisoners and backed by "hardliner" propaganda, and this has made it possible for the state to attempt to achieve with those of us who remain what it has sought to do for the past 20 years, namely bring an end to the prisoner problem.

What would be the state's interest in this?

It's important for the state to continue to develop its picture of a political enemy, and the state under no circumstances wants to allow a political process to develop, as we propose. The history of the RAF is to end with an accounting, with the burden falling on some individuals, and not with a political process. And that's not just the case with the RAF, rather it's what the authorities have in mind for society in general.

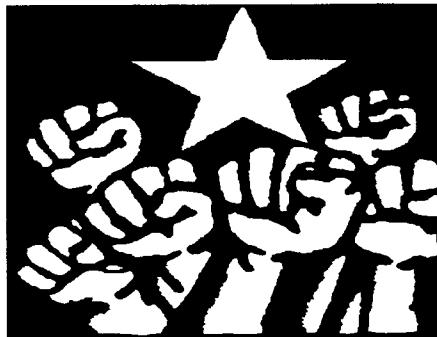
But the fact that the state can do this is also partly the fault of the RAF, a group which was never very open to controversial discussions, and which was a group which many people couldn't imagine except in the context of killing people.

Of course, it also comes back to the RAF itself. In the 1980s, controversial discussions weren't exactly a speciality of the RAF. It was the same way in other leftist groups. The causes for that, in my opinion, go way back to fundamental mistakes by us, but also in other leftist groups as well, namely the fact that political structures were hardly developed at all. Instead, ideology and actionism prevailed. But

the RAF concept always stressed the primacy of politics, the armed actions were supposed to advance politics, not replace it.

Leftist groups often criticized the fact that the RAF acted primarily on a military, rather than a political, basis.

Yes, but only when it fit with their political concept. That's why these discussions always failed. I think the fundamental mistakes made by everyone, from groups on the radical-left in general to the RAF itself, was that we weren't based enough in reality and were too obsessed with ideology. There were meetings, papers, concept discussions, events, campaigns - but these weren't reality. And the collapse of the radical-left at the end of the '80s and the beginning of the '90s was the hour of truth for this structure of politics which had come out of the '60s - if something had been won from the struggle, which was what it was all about all along, then something should have been taken out of that. But that didn't happen. Instead, self-dis-



solution or running in place. And that brings us to the point that it's not any different for the RAF, the German radical-left, or the left in general, namely that we were never able to escape from the contradiction of living in the most developed social system and not being able to avoid the contradictions which arise from that fact. On the one hand, you want to escape from that system to something different, on the other hand it's the best of all places that are visible. This contradiction in our spectrum led to a theory and praxis of ideological thinking, characterized in cyclical activity and actionism. I call that "replacement politics". Politics means real processes. Not ideology. The white European left, and the German left in particular, was more clever than anyone. No one read more or talked more than the left here did. But that's not politics. That's a sign of a stationary process which remains adapted to social norms. An example of what I mean by "stationary": Women have often noted that the never-ending so-called "sexism debate", the men's discussion of it, has only ever resulted in the problem being endlessly debated, seen as politically tackled, and everything stays the way it was. And the women are right about this. It's a sort of problem-defeating mechanism. The same is true for the anti-racism discussion. During the anti-IMF actions in 1992 [in Munich], the events served as a replacement for politics.

And the RAF, in your opinion, is part of

this stationary process?

The RAF became a part of it. The actions which we carried out in the second half of the 1980s were fundamentally wrong according to most of the prisoners still inside today. For us, armed actions always had a strategic function. They were to make something clear, to advance something. The actions of the late '80s were just a series of shootings. And when you get right down to it, to their political core, they were nothing but revenge attacks. And the RAF knew we would criticize these actions. They knew, from me especially, that I was against things continuing to develop as they had, with more people going into illegality. When a concept no longer has any perspective, you can't attract new people, even on the basis of maintaining the ability to attack. People going underground envision continuing the struggle which they had previously carried out in concrete base projects, only now on a different level, but in reality they are entering a vacuum. I don't want to create a false impression here, or to separate us from that. We were all part of this process and developed it. I'm speaking now about the changes in the relationships in the unwinding the prisoners issue over the past few years. We kept it going because we wanted a continuity, from the initial outcry to the silence. We all agreed about the unavoidable effects a total collapse would have, so we wanted to maintain some source of strength. That kept us from the drawing the decisive conclusion.

But aren't you stating a contradiction: on the one hand a continuity, on the other hand being opposed to new people joining the illegal structures?

It wasn't about a continuity of the RAF as it had existed before, rather a continuity of political content. The armed struggle was not the political content of the RAF. The political content of the RAF, to be brief, was liberation.

You criticize the attacks and assassinations by the RAF in the latter half of the 1980s. What was better about the earlier actions? What's the difference, for example, between the failed attempt to kill General Krösen and the shooting of the diplomat von Braunmühl?

You are speaking there about an action where the different understandings meet one another. We were critical of actions in the '80s such as the one against von Braunmühl because the means and the political goal were far removed from one another. And that is true even for those of us who experienced '77, the so-called "hardliners". The action against Krösen or the U.S. army installation at Ramstein were part of the conflicts surrounding NATO militarization. Both were strategic actions, attacks which, we thought, would help force the global collapse of militarization in the metropoles.

Preventing militarization was also a goal of the peace movement, which by and



large denounced the RAF's attacks. Didn't that make you wonder?

Well, there were a lot of things about the peace movement that made us wonder. For example, the peace movement also had some very nationalistic elements. They were primarily opposed to a war being fought here, and this wing of the peace movement did not concern itself with imperialism's interests or war aims.

But if you criticize the peace movement for having nationalistic tendencies, then you must also recognize that in older RAF texts as well. There, Germany is described as being a U.S. puppet and an occupied country.

Those are tones from the '70s, based in an incorrect, shortened analysis: The fact that U.S. capital was dominant in the world, and the fact that U.S. corporations dominated German corporations, led to the conclusion that Germany was a U.S. colony. That was false. But in our politics, this thinking only played a minor role.

But the attacks of that time were mainly directed at U.S. military installations and U.S. military personnel.

Yes, but always in conjunction with NATO and militarization. Those weren't actions against America as some occupying power. But I will

admit that in the left, and in our structures, there were some weak areas, some anti-American tendencies which went so far as to reject American culture. But we, I was underground at the time, always criticized this anti-Americanism disguised as anti-imperialism in our discussions and during our contacts. But we weren't always successful. But I think there exists a false impression of our situation and our sympathizers from that time. At the beginning of the '80s, we didn't want to strengthen the RAF, rather we sent people who came to us back into the local struggles. We wanted structures and political processes, but all we heard was the demand that we carry out actions. We couldn't change that pressure at that time. It's wrong to imagine that things always go the way one plans in a concept. The same thing failed later on during the cessation debate.

For a long time, the demand was made to regroup the prisoners in one or two groups so that a discussion could take place among them. How do you think things should proceed today?

At the present time, we need to get the demand put back on the table that we need to be released. Now, as before, that is a political question, not a legal one. We're not talking about some abstract principle here. We aren't even that affected by the Justice Department in general, rather the BAW [Federal Prosecutor's Office] and the state security courts, and our

cases are all well known. Besides, most of us are in very poor health, so the question of us spending 20 years plus a few more, depending on the individual, is not an option. We need to find ways now of being released. And to do this, there need to be a decision which is more than words. It must be something visible, in our prisoners statute: What does someone do, who will be released in the foreseeable future? That person can build up social relations on the outside. The same must also be allowed to us. We must be able to start building the foundations for how we want to live. There must be communication and projects to work on. Right now, we have almost no contact to the outside. I'd like to stress that this interview today has been one of the few chances I've had to speak with someone from the outside for a long period of time. The biggest success of my time inside has been a 90 minute conversation, without the police watching over me, a few weeks ago...

Is this orientation towards communication with people on the outside a consensus among the prisoners?

It depends, some think regroupment is more important so that we can make a public statement together. I always thought it was more important to get out.

We alone are too few to succeed, we need further reaching exchanges. We can't just keep repeating the catch phrase "discussion" for years on end. Of course we seek discussions for our common interests, but communication with the outside needs to mainly aim at finding ways to win our freedom.

The worst thing that has happened to us, and from it came the bitter internal splits, was the fact that long years of isolation left us in a situation where we could not deal with this isolation. The things which have happened over these long years needed to be discussed and looked at together with others. But we weren't allowed to do this. Instead we came from isolation into the vacuum of our stations, a group of people in prison, a small group who couldn't meet together inside and who were prevented from contacting the outside. Once the first of us starting having health problems was when the isolation treatment really began to kick in. This isolation, which we have experienced with our own bodies, needs to be struggled against at every turn. If someone has been inside for a long time, afterwards something needs to happen, you can't just take off the lid and then that person has to see where they're at. And when I say that, as someone who has experienced it, I'm not just trying to describe darkest moments of our history, rather because this systematic isolation is now become characteristic of prisons in general. That which we were subjected to from day one is now being applied to other prisoners who are selected to endure it.

Endnote: Pohl was released from prison in 1998.

(Translated by Arm The Spirit from 'junge Welt' - May 5, 1999)

Sieglinde Hofmann Free After 19 Years

Lawyers Seeks Freedom For All Remaining RAF Prisoners

On May 4, 1999, at 4pm, Sieglinde Hofmann walked out the gates of Cologne Prison (JVA-Köln) after 19 years of imprisonment. Due to her alleged participation in the kidnapping of Jürgen Ponto, the murder of Hanns-Martin Schleyer, and three counts of attempted murder for the attack on Alexander Haig, an international warrant for Sieglinde Hofmann's arrest was issued in the late 1970s. She was arrested in France in May 1980 and deported to Germany on the condition that prosecutors not seek a life term against her. Back in Germany, she was sentenced to 15 years in prison on flimsy evidence, and because a witness for the state responded to the question, "Do you want to speak out in favor of Ms. Hofmann?", with silence. In the words of Heinz-Jürgen Schneider, Sieglinde Hofmann's lawyers since 1991: "Since the court took no answer for an answer, they judged her guilty in the Ponto kidnapping case."

But the end of Sieglinde Hofmann's prison term in the fall of 1995 did not mean that she was free. Some former Red Army Fraction (RAF) members who had dropped out and resettled in East Germany turned into witnesses for the state. "For my client", Schneider says, "it meant that a former RAF member implicated her in the murder of Hanns-Martin Schleyer." That meant a life sentence

being handed down in the fall of 1995. "But even prisoners who are serving life terms must be given a chance at freedom", says Schneider. "At a hearing, statements from prison officials have to be given, and the prisoners have to detail their proposals for their lives after they are released." One such hearing at the State Supreme Court in Stuttgart in late 1997 came to the conclusion that Sieglinde Hofmann must serve at least 19 years. In March, her definitive release date was set at May 4, 1999.

"Despite my joy at the release of my client, we must not forget that there are still six other former RAF members in prison", the lawyer continues. "Christian Klar, who has been in prison since 1982, is supposed to serve 26 years. For the other five, Rolf Heissler, Rolf-Clemens Wagner, Brigitte Mohnhaupt, Eva Haule, and Birgit Hogefeld, there is no end in sight for their prison terms."

The release of Sieglinde Hofmann is less a political success and rather more an isolated case which shouldn't be generalized upon, the lawyer points out. "To reach our goal of freedom for all political prisoners, a political base has to be created. We need a social climate of acceptance for this."

(Translated by Arm The Spirit from 'junge Welt' - May 5, 1999)

The Urban Guerrilla Is History

Final Communique From The Red Army Fraction

Almost 28 years ago, on May 14, 1970, the RAF was born from an act of liberation: Today we are ending this project. The urban guerrilla in the form of the RAF is now history.

We, that is all of us who were organized in the RAF until the end, are taking this step jointly. From now on, we, like all others from this association, are former RAF militants.

We stand by our history. The RAF was the revolutionary attempt by a minority of people to resist the tendencies in this society and contribute to the overthrow of capitalist conditions. We are proud to have been part of this attempt.

The end of this project shows that we were not able to succeed on this path. But this does not speak against the necessity and legitimacy of revolt. The RAF was our decision to stand on the side of those people struggling against domination and for liberation all across the world. For us, this was the right decision to make.

Hundreds of years in prison terms for RAF prisoners were not able to wipe us out, nor could all the attempts to eradicate the guerrilla. We wanted a confrontation with the ruling powers. We acted as subjects when we decided upon the RAF 27 years ago. We remain subjects today, as we consign ourselves to history.

The results are critical of us. But the RAF - like all of the left until now - was nothing more than a phase of transition on the path to liberation.

After fascism and war, the RAF brought something new into the society: The moment of a break with the system and the historic flash of decisive opposition to the conditions which structurally subject and exploit people and which brought about a society in which the people are forced to fight against one another. The struggle in the social cracks, which marked our opposition, pushed a genuine social liberation forward; this break with the system, a system in which profit is the subject and people are the objects, and the desire for a life without the lies and weight of this distorted society. Fed up with stooping down, functioning, kicking, and being kicked. From rejection to attack, to liberation.

The RAF Arose From The Hope For Liberation

Backed by the courage which emanated from the guerrillas from the South to the rich nations of the North, the RAF came about in the early 1970s in solidarity with liberation movements in order to take up a common struggle. Millions of people saw in the struggles of resistance and liberation around the globe a chance for themselves as well. The armed struggle was a hope for liberation in many parts of

the world. In Germany, too, tens of thousands of people were in solidarity with the struggles of the militant organizations Second of June Movement, the Revolutionary Cells (RZ), the RAF, and later Rote Zora. The RAF came about as a result of the discussions of thousands of people in Germany who began to think about armed struggle as a means to liberation in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The RAF took up the struggle against the state, a state which had never broken with its national-socialist past following the liberation from Nazi fascism.

The armed struggle was a rebellion against an authoritarian form of society, against alienation and competition. It was a rebellion for a new social and cultural reality. In the euphoria of the global attempts at liberation, the time was right for a decisive struggle which seriously aimed at overturning and no longer accepting the pseudo-natural legitimacy of the system.

1975-77

With the 1975 occupation of the German embassy in Stockholm, the RAF launched a phase during which it did everything possible to liberate its prisoners from jail.

First came the "1977 Offensive", during which the RAF kidnapped Schleyer. The RAF posed the question of power. This began a radical and decisive attempt to push through an offensive position for the revolutionary left against the state power. It was exactly this which the state wanted to prevent. The explosive escalation of the conflict, however, also came against the background of German history: The continuity of Nazism in the West German state, which the RAF attacked with its offensive.

Schleyer, a member of the SS during the Nazi regime, was, like many Nazis in all levels of society, back in office with all his honor intact. Nazis built careers in the West German state in government positions, the courts, the police apparatus, the armed forces, the media, and in major corporations. These anti-Semites, racists, and genocidal murderers were often times the same people responsible for crimes against humanity under the Nazis, and now they were back among the powerful elite.

Schleyer worked towards the ends of the Nazis and the capitalists to create a European economic region under German dominance. The Nazis had wanted a Europe in which there were neither struggles between industrial workers and capital nor any resistance whatsoever to their system. They wanted to end the class struggle by utilizing German workers or workers who could "be made like Germans" and incorporating them into their society. All others were to be enslaved to forced labor or systematically destroyed in concentration camps.

With the liberation from Nazi fascism came



the end of the industrial destruction of people by the Nazis, but there was no liberation from capitalism. After 1945, Schleyer worked towards the same economic goals - in a more modernized form. The push towards modernization came with the social democratic model of the 1970s. As the chief of industry, Schleyer was continually building up a system to contain social resistance to the conditions of capital - for example, by locking out workers - and to integrate workers into the system by means of negotiated contracts for social security. This integration was meant to incorporate the German portion of the society most of all, meanwhile capital increasingly exploited immigrant workers and, at the global level, dominated and exploited the people of the southern hemisphere, which resulted in massive destruction from hunger. The continuity of the system which Schleyer embodied - in the 1970s during the period of the social democratic model - was a crucial moment in the building and development of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Absolute Necessity To Approve Of All Measures Enacted By The Crisis Staff And The Repression Of All Critical Voices, Going So Far As To Try And Eliminate The Political Prisoners - These Were The Same Reactionary Techniques Utilized By The Nazis

The actions of the 1977 offensive made it clear that there were elements in the society which would in no way be integrated into or controlled by the system. After the Nazis had eliminated the resistance, the actions of the urban guerrilla groups after 1968 marked a return to a moment of class struggle, no longer integrated to the ruling powers, in post-fascist West Germany. The abduction of Schleyer heightened this aspect even more. The state did not by any means react with panic, as has often been said. The state reacted by suppressing all forms of expression which did not support the state of emergency measures. The state ordered all media to follow the line of the Crisis Staff, which most willingly did. All who refused risked a confrontation with the system. Intellectuals, who everyone knew did not sympathize with the RAF, but who nonetheless contradicted the state of emergency, were no longer safe from smear campaigns and repression. The members of the government's



Crisis Staff, some of whom had military backgrounds, reacted with the same means in 1977 as the Nazis had done - although the Nazis, of course, went to a far greater degree of barbarity - to prevent and wipe out anti-capitalist and anti-fascist struggles. Under Nazi fascism, and in 1977, the state's policies were aimed at eliminating any space between total loyalty to the state in an emergency situation on the one side and repression on the other.

When it became more clear that the state was prepared to abandon Schleyer, the RAF gave its approval for a civilian airliner to be hijacked in a guerrilla action as part of its own offensive, and this made it appear as though the RAF no longer differentiated between the top and bottom sectors of the society. Although the attempt to free the prisoners from torture was justified, the social-revolutionary dimension of the struggle was now no longer visible. From the break with the system and the rejection of the conditions in the society - the pre-conditions for any revolutionary movement - had come a break with the society as a whole.

From The 1970s To The 1980s

The RAF had gambled everything and suffered a huge defeat. In the process of struggle until the end of the 1970s, it became clear that the RAF was left with just a few people from the period of the 1968 upheavals. Many people from the '68 movement had given up on movement politics and used their chances to build careers. The RAF, as part of the global anti-imperialist struggle, had taken up the war of liberation within West Germany. The year 1977 had shown, however, that the RAF had neither the political nor the military strength to direct the situation after the subsequent reaction, the domestic war. It was right to make use of the historical situation at the beginning of the 1970s and open a new and previously unknown chapter of struggle in the metropoles in the fight between imperialism and liberation. The experiences of the defeat of 1977 revealed the limitations of the old urban guerrilla concept of the RAF. There needed to be a new concept of liberation.

The front concept of the 1980s was an attempt to achieve this. The RAF wanted new ties and a basis for a joint struggle with radical segments of the resistance movements which had arisen in the late 1970s. But the front concept held on to many of the basic notions of the old project from the 1970s. Armed actions remained the central focus and the decisive moment of the revolutionary process, which was seen as a war of liberation.

The Anti-Imperialist Front Of The 1980s

In the early 1980s, there were several struggles directed against inhumane projects of the system, but which were also expressions of the search for free forms of living. A social revolt which sought a new social reality, now.

Thousands of people from these new movements went onto the streets in the 1980s to protest the same thing which the RAF sought to attack since 1979: The militarization policies of the NATO states, which would enable the

West to wage "one and a half" wars simultaneously, the war against the Soviet Union and, at the same time, warlike interventions against liberation movements and revolutions, like in Nicaragua, where the first step towards liberation from Western dictatorship had been taken.

The RAF assumed that they would not be alone during this new phase. The concept was fueled by the hope that militant sectors of various movements would join a common front. But this concept failed to recognize that, in the given social situation, only very few people saw any purpose in a liberation struggle on the level of a war. The liberation struggle, whose central moment is that of war, only makes sense when there is a possibility that there are forces in the society who are willing to take it up and expand it - at the very least, the radical elements of the movements.

But even those who were in solidarity - and they were by no means few in number - did not take up the struggle with this in mind. A guerrilla war requires a perspective for expansion to a level of struggle. This is necessary for the existential development of the guerrilla, and we were not able to achieve this.

The RAF's notion of armed action at the focal point of the struggle placed less importance on the political and cultural processes outside of the political-military struggle. Overcoming this strategic direction, which had come from the fundamental structure of the concept in the 1970s, should have been a precondition for any new revolutionary project. The front could not become this new liberation project to remove the distinctions between the movements and the guerrilla.

In the 1980s, the RAF operated under the assumption that a social-revolutionary approach lay in the attacks on the central power structures of imperialism. With this approach, the RAF's politics became increasingly abstract. This led to a split of what should be united: anti-imperialism and social revolution. The social revolutionary outlook disappeared from the theory and praxis of the RAF. The orientation became reduced to the anti-imperialist line, and

under the anti-imperialist attack against the "entire system" produced false divisions instead of a process of unity; and it led to a lack of identity on concrete questions and the content of the struggle.

The resonance within the society remained limited, because the proposal to create consciousness in the society and to break the consensus between the state and the society - a central moment of any revolutionary process - disappeared. Instead, the RAF sought to destroy the state's dominance of control by increasing the intensity of its attacks. The priority shifted to the military dimension. This emphasis remained throughout the 1980s and it defined our struggle.

We carried out attacks against NATO projects as well as the military-industrial complex of capital, together with other guerrilla groups in Western Europe; an attempt was made to forge a West European Guerrilla Front comprised of the RAF, Action Directe in France, and the Red Brigades/PCC in Italy.

The RAF concentrated - as far as its strength allowed - on attacking NATO projects and, after 1984, the formation of a new power bloc by West European states. The focus remained on our own limited forces and those militants who closely identified with the RAF. The attempt to form a front with other groups from the resistance movement did not broaden into reality. For this reason, the front collapsed, because too much energy was spent on trying to adhere to the "correct" line. This narrow focus prevented any political dynamic from being created. Instead of a new horizon, which seemed possible given the variety of resistance in the early 1980s, the rigidness and narrowness of the politics increased as the decade wore on.

There was a great discrepancy between the willingness of RAF militants to give everything in the confrontation and the ability, at the same time, to seek new ideas for the process of liberation. In this respect, very little was risked.

During this time - the concept of the 1980s was by then a few years old already - there was also development on our side, which was characterized by demonstratively coldly driven politics, which was little more than "making politics", and which was far removed from anything having to do with liberation.

But this was also a time when the RAF and its prisoners, despite all the difficulties and defeats, showed with their determination that they had remained uncorrupted by the course of history and remained committed to changing the conditions against the will of the ruling powers. This gave others hope as well and drew in people who wanted to struggle for collectivity and togetherness and against isolation and loneliness in the society. The struggle by the prisoners against isolation detention and for their regroupment, their struggle for dignity and freedom, which other people longed for as well, was something many people could identify with. The determination and lack of compromise by the RAF and the prisoners against the ruling powers stood in the face of all attempts by the authorities to suppress all struggles for an-



Gundrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader

the result of this was the anti-imperialist front. The RAF was not a factor in social questions. This was a fundamental mistake.

Subsuming all social and political content



other way of living.

We, Most Of Whom Became Organized In The RAF Very Late...

...joined in the hope that our struggle could contribute new impulses for global revolt in the changed conditions. We sought changes for the liberation struggle, for a new path on which we could join ourselves with others. And we wanted to give something back to those who had taken up the struggle before us, and who had died or been sent to prison. The struggle in illegality had a very attractive affect on us. We wanted to break though our borders and be free of everything which confined us within the system.

Armed struggle in illegality was, for us, nothing more than the only possible and necessary way for the liberation process. But also, especially considering the crisis of the left all around the world, we wanted to further develop the urban guerrilla as a possibility and keep illegality as a terrain for the liberation process. But we recognized then that that alone would not be enough. The guerrilla, too, would have to change.

Our hope was to create new ties between the guerrilla and other sectors of the resistance in the society. To do this, we sought a new proposal, in which all struggles from the city neighborhoods to the guerrilla could stand together.

It Was Important For Us, Following The Collapse Of East Germany, To Bring Our Struggle In Tune With The New Existing Social Situation

We wanted to take steps to relate to all those people whose dreams had ended with the collapse of the DDR and its annexation into West Germany. Some had realized that "real existing socialism" was not liberation after all. Others, who were part of the opposition to real existing socialism in East Germany, had dreamed of something different from either capitalism or



Ulrike Meinhof

real existing socialism. Most people who had lived in the DDR and who had demanded reunification with West Germany began to examine the new, depressing social situation which had come about, with social security measures having been drastically done away with. We wanted to relate to all those people, during this historical situation which was unknown to everyone, who had struggled for liberation in confrontation with the West German state and also those who were fed up with the racist and completely reactionary developments unfolding in the now non-existent East Germany. We did not want to abandon these people to resignation, or to the right-wing.

Later on we saw that the dimension of this change could only result in a new and internationalist liberation project if the new reality in both East and West were dealt with. The RAF, with its roots in the history of resistance in the old West Germany, could not achieve this.

The Attempt To Anchor The RAF In The 1990s Was An Unrealistic Proposal

We wanted to transform a concept which had arisen from the 1968 movement into a new, social revolutionary and internationalist concept in tune with the 1990s. This was a time when we sought for something new, but - weighed down by the dogmas of the past years - we did not go radically enough beyond the old concept. So we made the same mistakes which all of us made after 1977: We overestimated the support for this continuity of our conception of struggle. Fundamentally, the danger exists of discrediting armed struggle when it is maintained without explaining how it concretely advances the revolutionary process and leads to a strengthening of the liberation struggle. It is important to deal with this issue in a responsible manner, because otherwise the armed struggle becomes discredited - even for another situation, in which it is needed again.

The crisis, when the left reached its limits in the 1980s and began partially to disband, made our attempt to link the RAF into some new project an unrealistic proposal. We were much too late - even to transform the RAF after a period of reflection. Criticism and self-criticism do not aim at ending something, rather at further developing it. In short, the end of the RAF is not the result of our process of (self-)criticism and reflection, rather because it is necessary, because the concept of the RAF does not contain the necessary elements from which something new can arise.

When we examine this segment of our history today in light of the historical process in general, the attempt to bring the RAF back into a strong political process was more than anything just the prolongation of something which had long since had the perspective of a project at its end. We needed to realize that the form of struggle, above all else, was what had remained from the old concept. There was no new meaning, something which could offer a perspective of an alternative to the labor society and its inhumane, profit-oriented economy, something which could serve as the foundation for the liberation struggles of the future

and bring many people together.

Following our defeat in 1993, we knew that we couldn't just keep going on as we had since we began the break with our struggle in 1992. We were sure that we had set the correct goals for ourselves, but that we had made some serious tactical mistakes. We wanted to think things over one more time with those who were in prison, and take a new step together.

But in the end, the very hurtful split of one group of the prisoners from us, who declared us to be enemies, completely erased the very conditions which had given rise to the RAF in the first place - solidarity and the struggle for collectivity.

The Process Of Our Own Liberation...

...was important to us, and yet we always seemed to become stagnant. We desired collectivity just as we desired the joint overcoming of all forms of alienation. But the contradiction between war and liberation often got pushed off or talked away by us. Revolutionary war also produces alienation and structures of authority, which is in contradiction to liberation. Dealing with that, so that it does not become established as a structure, is only possible if there is consciousness about it. Otherwise it goes without saying that new structures of authority will arise, as well as a hardening in both politics and relationships. That fact showed itself during the often changing hierarchical structures of the front in the 1980s and the authoritarian tendencies during the split in 1993. And it showed itself during the relapse into mainstream analysis and thought, which, in the history of the RAF, led to many people who struggled here no longer being able to see a justification for total revolt any longer.

It Was A Strategic Mistake Not To Build Up A Political-Social Organization Alongside The Illegal, Armed Organization

In no phase of our history was an outreaching, political organization realized in addition to the political-military struggle. The concept of the RAF knew only the armed struggle, with a focus on the political-military attack.

In the formative communiques of the RAF up to the mid 1970s, this important question was never even posed, nor could it have been. In the metropoles in general, and especially in Germany, there was no previous experience with an urban guerrilla. Many things had to be discovered and learned along the way, and shown to be true or false in practice. Nevertheless, there was never an orientation to the decisive question, whether the project of liberation can be fulfilled by an illegal organization and the armed struggle - or if the building up of the guerrilla should go hand in hand with the expansion of political structures which can grow in the base processes. In January 1976, our imprisoned comrades wrote about this, stating that only an armed struggle from illegality could be a practical-critical opposition to imperialism. The concept in the May 1982 paper also maintained this position, despite all the contradictions and despite the fact that it was an attempt to find a new political association

together with other people. Because this concept, too, did not break with the notion that the armed struggle should be central in the metropoles. The political activities which arose from the front process got bogged down in communicating the attacks within the structures of the radical left.

The lack of a political organization for more than 20 years resulted in the continual weakening of the political process. The over-estimation of the political-military actions in the metropoles of the last few decades was the precondition for this concept. The RAF based its strategy on armed struggle, in different ways during different phases, but at no point did it arrive at the point where militant actions aim at: The tactical option of a comprehensive liberation strategy. This weakness also led to the fact that our organization could not transform itself after two decades. The preconditions for placing the focus of the struggle on the political level - which is what we wanted to do in 1992 - were not at hand. But, in the end, that was simply the result of fundamental strategic mistakes. The lack of a political-social organization was a decisive mistake by the RAF. It wasn't the only mistake, but it's one important reason why the RAF could not become a stronger liberation project, and in the end the necessary preconditions were lacking to build up a fighting counter-movement searching for liberation, one which could have a strong influence on social developments. The mistakes inherent in the concept, such as these, which accompanied the RAF throughout its entire history show that the concept of the RAF can no longer be relevant in the liberation processes of the future.

The End Of The RAF Comes At A Time When The Whole World Is Confronted With The Effects Of Neo-Liberalism - The International Struggle Against Displacement, Alienation, And For A Just And Fundamentally Different Social Reality Is In Opposition To The Entire Development Of Capitalism

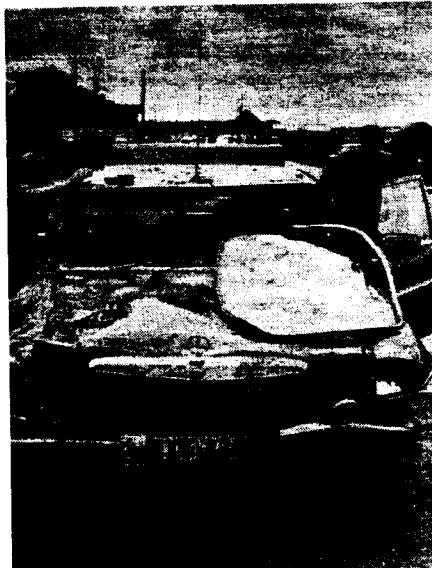
Global and inner-societal relations are becoming heightened in the turbulence of the historical developments following the end of real existing socialism. Nevertheless, it is not a contradiction for us to end our project while still recognizing the necessity that everything which is useful and possible must be done so that a world without capitalism can come about, one in which the emancipation of humanity can be realized. Considering the devastating effects of the collapse of real existing socialism worldwide, and the mass poverty of millions of people in the former Soviet Union, it's not enough to talk today of the chances which have been brought about by the end of real existing socialism. Nevertheless, we recognize that true liberation was not possible under the model of real existing socialism. It is possible to draw consequences from the anti-emancipatory experiences with the authoritarian and state bureaucratic concepts of real existing socialism and to recognize future paths to liberation.

With the collapse of real existing social-

ism, the competition between systems ended, meaning that the proponents of the capitalist system no longer feel the need to make their system appear to be "better". In the absence of an ideological check on capital, a process of global unleashing of capital has resulted: All of humanity are to be subjected to the needs of capital. Neo-liberalism is the ideological and economic foundation for a world wide push towards optimization and the evaluation of people and nature according to the demands of capital. Representatives of the system call this "reform" or "modernization".

It is more than clear that the present stage of the development of the system will bring an overwhelming majority of humanity further social and existential difficulty. For the majority of the people in the world, neo-liberalism adds a new dimension to the threats on their lives.

In the struggle for political hegemony and economic power, only those economies sur-



RAF Attack On NATO General Haig

vive which increasingly orient their capacities towards the blank profits of the corporations and an ever smaller segment of the society. The side effects of this system lead to deep changes within societies. Furthermore, increasing poverty and the increasing brutalization of a further unleashing of wars and barbarity. If their own economic and political interests are at stake, the rich nations will intervene in these conflicts with their own wars, in order to secure "unlimited access to raw materials" in the earth and to enhance their positions of power. They will never concern themselves with actually solving the problems of people, rather they wish to control the destruction which their system sets into motion so as to squeeze out profits for the few.

It is not a contradiction, rather it is a part of the logic of the system that transnational corporations are more powerful than ever, with larger profits than ever, in this phase of political systems in crisis all around the world, the breaking apart of societies, and the impoverishment of wider sectors of the metropolitan masses who had previously been spared from material

problems.

Paradoxically, the successful maximization of profits by capital and the process of social collapse called forth by it seems to be pushing capitalism to its limits. This development threatens, above all else, to result in further outbreaks of barbarity: From the independent dynamic of system development, this negative process will continue, until such time as there is a proposal for liberation which can call forth a new force to overturn the system. But today, there is not only the defeat of the historic left and the violence of the global social relations, there is also a wealth of rebel movements who can draw on the experiences of the global history of resistance.

In this global development, capitalism, in the metropoles as well, tries to buy social peace by means of "welfare systems". Instead, however, increasingly large segments of the society become marginalized when they are no longer needed in the production process. The "world power" and the "welfare state" can no longer exist together under one roof. In Europe, for example, the old "welfare states" are coming under the political and economic hegemony of Germany, with Germany serving as a racist frontline state in an entire continent which is turning into a police state.

The police and military are deployed against those fleeing from poverty, war, and oppression. A society full of prisons. Cops and security forces tossing the homeless out of the consumer shopping areas, as well as youths and anyone else who upsets the regular customers and the bourgeoisie. The re-introduction of closed facilities as prisons for kids. The attempt to exert total control over refugees in the near future by means of computer chip cards, with other social groups coming later on. Police batons and weapons against the foreseeable revolts by those pushed to the edges. Exclusion, repression, and displacement. Even the total perfection of humans by means of genetic engineering can no longer be considered unthinkable.

Exclusion and repression through a lack of social feeling within the society as well is normal both here and elsewhere. Racism from below threatens the lives of millions, which in Germany is the murderous mark of the historical continuity which this society carries with it. The exclusion of handicapped persons from above and aggression against them from below are expressions of the day to day brutality of the society. Only people who don't contradict the efficiency of the economic system are desired, as well as anything which can be capitalized. Anything else which is outside of the needs of the capitalist society are given no place. The great many people who can no longer live here, or who no longer want to - and there are many people who chose to end their lives every day - speak of the emptiness of the system and the hardness in the society.

The marketing of people and the violence in the home and on the streets, these are the violence of suppression, the social coldness against others, the violence against women - all of these are expressions of patriarchal and racist conditions.



The RAF always stood in contradiction to the conscious mentality of a large segment of this society. That is a necessary moment in the process of liberation, because it's not only the conditions which are reactionary, rather the conditions produce reactionary character in people, and this continually suppresses their ability to become liberated. Without a doubt, it is a matter of existence to resist and fight against racism and all forms of oppression. Future outlines for liberation must be measured according to this, and they must find a key to unlocking the closed, reactionary consciousness and awakening the desire for emancipation and liberation.

The Reality Of The World Today Proves That It Would Have Been Better If The Global Wave Of Revolt, Which The RAF Was A Part Of, Had Been Successful

The global wave of revolt, which the RAF arose from as well, did not succeed, which does not mean that the destructive and unjust developments up until today can't still be turned around. The fact that we still don't see sufficient answers to these developments weighs more heavily upon us than the mistakes which we made. The RAF came from the revolts of the last decades, which did not exactly foresee how the system would develop, but which at least recognized the threat which it posed. We knew that this system would allow fewer and fewer people around the world to live their lives with dignity. And we also knew that this system seeks total access to people, so that they subjugate themselves to the values of the system and make them their own. Our radicalism sprung from these realizations. For us, we had nothing to lose with this system. Our struggle - the violence with which we resisted these relations - had a difficult, a heavy side. The liberation war has its shadows, too. Attacking people in their capacity as functionaries for the state is a contradiction to the thoughts and feelings of all revolutionaries in the world - it contradicts their notion of liberation. Even when there are phases in the liberation process when this is viewed as necessary, because there are people who desire injustice and oppression and who seek to defend their own power or the power of others. Revolutionaries desire

a world in which no one has the right to decide who may live and who may not. Nevertheless, our violence upset some people in an irrational way. The real terror is the normality of the economic system.

The RAF Was Not The Answer For Liberation - It Was One Aspect Of It

Although many questions remain open today, we are sure that from the liberation ideas of the future the seed of free relations can arise, if it truly does embrace the variety which is needed to overturn the conditions. It is useless to speak of "the correct line", the aspect of life outside of which everything else seems inefficient, just as it is to seek a revolutionary subject. The project of liberation in the future will know many subjects and a variety of aspects and content, and this had nothing to do with being random. We need a new proposal in which seemingly very different individuals or social groups can be subjects, and yet still be together. In this sense, the liberation project of the future will not contain the old concepts of the German left since 1968, not those of the RAF or other groups. The joy of building an encompassing, anti-authoritarian, and yet binding organizing project of liberation lies before us still, sadly too little attempted up until now. We see that there are people all over the world who are trying this, to find ways out of the vacuum.

We draw hope from the fact that everywhere, even in the most remote corners of this country - where the cultural hegemony of the fascist right is no longer a seldom thing - there are people who have the courage to join together against racism and neo-nazism, to defend themselves and others and to struggle.

It is necessary to recognize that we are at a dead end and we need to find ways out. So it makes sense to abandon things which can only be carried forward in a theoretical sense. Our decision to end something is the expression of our search for new answers. We know that we are joined with many other people around the world in this search.

There will be many future discussions until all the experiences have been brought together and we have a realistic and reflective picture of history.

We want to be part of a joint liberation. We want to make some of our own processes recognizable, and we want to learn from others.

This excludes the notion of a vanguard which leads the struggle. Although the concept of being the "vanguard" had been dropped from our understanding of the struggle for years, the old concept of the RAF would not allow this to be actually done away with. That's another reason why we had to cut ourselves loose from this concept.

The Guerrillas In The Metropoles Brought The War Back Into The Belly Of The Beast, To The Imperialist States Which Waged Their Wars Outside Their Own Centers Of Power

Despite everything which we could have done better, it was fundamentally correct to oppose the conditions in West Germany and to seek to wage resistance to the continuity of German history. We wanted to open up chances for revolutionary struggle in the metropoles as well.

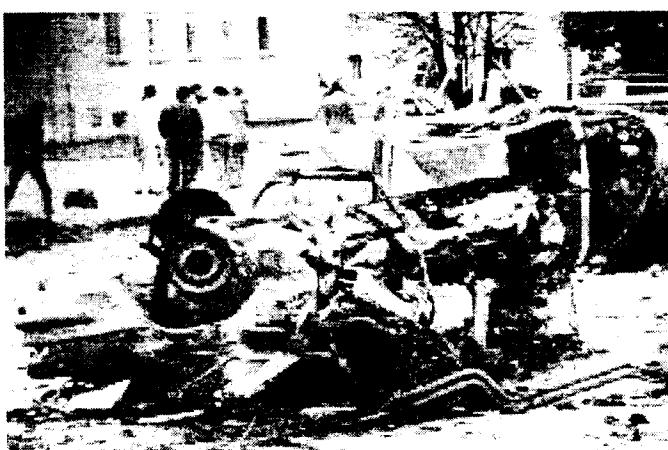
The RAF took up its own social terrain of struggle and sought to develop it for more than two decades, a terrain which historically knew little resistance, lacked a movement against fascism, and which was characterized by a population loyal to fascism and barbarism. Unlike in other countries, in Germany, liberation from fascism had to come from the outside. There was no self-determined break with fascism "from below" here. There were very few people in this country who resisted fascism; too few with any trace of humanity. Those who struggled in the Jewish resistance, in the communist resistance - in whatever anti-fascist resistance - were right to struggle. And they will always be right. They were the few glimmers of light in the history of this country since 1933, when fascism began to kill off all that was social in this society.

In contrast to these people, the trend in this society was always more or less to accept what those in power said; authority determined what is legitimate. In the social destruction of this society, which was a precondition for the genocide by the Nazis, the indifference to any other essential moment remains today. The RAF broke with German tradition after Nazi fascism and refused to grant it any legitimacy. The RAF came from the revolt against it. It not only rejected this national and social continuity, it waged an internationalist struggle in place of this negation, a struggle whose praxis rejected the ruling conditions in the German state and attacked the military structures of its NATO allies. All over the world, this alliance, in whose hierarchy the USA was the driving force and the unquestioned leader, sought to defeat social rebellions and liberation movements by means of the military and war. The guerrillas in the metropoles brought the war, which the imperialists waged outside their centers of power, back into the belly of the beast.

We answered the violent conditions with the violence of revolt.

It is not possible for us to look back on a smooth and perfect history. But we tried to do something, and in doing so we overstepped many of the ruling powers' laws and the internalized boundaries of bourgeois society.

The RAF was not able to point out the path to liberation. But it contributed for two decades to the fact that there are still thoughts about liberation today. Putting the system in question was and still is legitimate, as long as there is dominance and oppression instead of freedom, emancipation, and dignity for everyone in the world.



Aftermath Of RAF Bombing At The Rhein-Main Airbase



There are nine former militants from the struggle of the RAF still in prison. Although the struggle for liberation is far from over, this conflict has become part of history. We support all efforts which seek to get the prisoners from this conflict out of prison upright.

At this time, we'd like to greet and thank all of those who offered us solidarity on our path for the past 28 years, who supported us in various ways, and who struggled together with us in the ways that they could. The RAF was determined to contribute to the struggle for liberation. This revolutionary intervention in this country and in this history would never have taken place if many people, not organized in the RAF themselves, hadn't given a part of themselves to this struggle. A common path lies behind all of us. We hope that we will all find ourselves together again on the unknown and winding paths of liberation.

Our thoughts are with all those around the world who lost their lives in the struggle against domination and for liberation. The goals which they strived for are the goals of today and tomorrow - until all relations have been over-

turned in which a person is but a lowly object, a downcast, abandoned, and contemptuous being. It is sad that so many gave their lives, but their deaths were not in vain. They live on in the struggles and the future liberation.

We will never forget the comrades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) who lost their lives in the fall of 1977 in an act of internationalist solidarity, seeking to liberate the political prisoners. Today we would especially like to remember all those who chose to give their all to the armed struggle here, and who lost their lives.

Our memories and all our respect goes out to those whose names we do not know, because we never knew them, and to

Petra Schelm
Georg von Rauch
Thomas Weissbecker
Holger Meins
Katharina Hammerschmidt
Ulrich Wessel
Siegfried Hausner
Werner Sauber

Brigitte Kuhlmann
Wilfried Böse
Ulrike Meinhof
Jan-Carl Raspe
Gudrun Ensslin
Andreas Baader
Ingrid Schubert
Willi-Peter Stoll
Michael Knoll
Elisabeth van Dyck
Juliane Plambeck
Wolfgang Beer
Sigurd Debus
Johannes Timme
Jürgen Peemoeller
Ina Siepmann
Gerd Albartus
Wolfgang Grams

The revolution says:
I was
I am
I will be again

Red Army Fraction - March 1998

"RAF Passe - Resistance Passe?"

Interview With Till Meyer, Former Member Of The 'Second Of June Movement', On The End Of The RAF

In their communique, the Red Army Fraction acknowledge the "failure of the urban guerrilla project". Is this statement that armed struggle in general has failed, or is this only a concrete reference to the RAF?

The revolutionary intervention at the military level, in a highly-industrialized country like West Germany, can only be seen as a method which was tested during a very particular historical context. Historically, using military means towards the foundations, goals, and proposals of the '68 movement - of which the RAF was one part - had to fail. Especially once the global conditions for struggle had changed. When the conflict between socialism and capitalism ended in 1989 with the overwhelming victory of capitalism, there was no basis for it any longer. So it's no surprise that the RAF has now drawn the consequences from that fact and cancelled the armed struggle. In Germany, in this form, in this time, and with this strategy for revolt, it is finished.

The dissolution communique had been expected for quite some time, and since 1993 there had not been any more actions. But when had the RAF become politically finished with its armed struggle in Germany? Only when East Germany ceased to exist?

The RAF themselves, in their text "The Concept Of The Urban Guerrilla", once wrote: "Whether armed struggle is possible can only be transmitted through praxis." That means, after a certain time, they should have made a

clean slate, and based on their practical experiences asked themselves whether the urban guerrilla makes sense in this historical period, whether it is having an effect or achieving something politically. After all, it wasn't just about going around blowing things up and shooting people, rather it was a political-military intervention. After ten years, at the most, there should have been some critical political reflections. After the disastrous action in Mogadishu in October 1977, the RAF should have ended their armed struggle.

The head of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Peter Fritsch, has warned about premature celebrations of the end of the RAF, since they are still an extremist movement which wishes to build a "broad counter-power from below". Its members want to "continue the political struggle for social liberation together with others". Is the new generation of the RAF the PDS [Party of Democratic Socialism], or do they still envision continuing the political struggle from illegality, as Fritsch seems to indicate?

When Mr. Fritsch claims, which is his right as head of the intelligence agency, that people who are active politically in a completely legal way are somehow more radical than everything else which we today call leftist, namely Joschka Fischer [of the Greens], who is supposedly the furthest on the left wing - anyone else is just a foolish radical or a Stalinist, he says - then of course he is mistaken. It is completely legitimate and politically justified, even in this country, to place social questions on the

agenda, and in a radical manner - of course in a clear, offensive, and legal political confrontation. It could be that there are a few hundred thousand people to the left of the PDS who will say that they will perhaps organize themselves. That is legitimate and legal. Mr. Fritsch's statement is truly out of line.

Will the RAF's statement have a positive effect on the prisoners from this movement, or could it be that the prisoners, who are now without the "free the guerrillas guerrilla" of the past years, will sink into obscurity and be forgotten?

We shouldn't hope so. It's a fact that there are 9 people - some of whom have been in prison for over 20 years - still in prison. Now that the RAF has officially declared themselves disbanded, that marks an end to a 30-year history which is unique to this country. So the victor - whomever is in power in Bonn - needs to respond and draw this thing to a close by letting these people out of prison. It is definitely time for that, especially with the century drawing to a close. This chapter is finished. With the RAF's struggle over, the ruling elite here can breathe more easily after 30 years of watching their backs. They should at least be prepared to offer a gesture and draw this to a close by releasing the prisoners.

What's lacking, of course, is an operative guerrilla which can exert pressure for the prisoners. This task needs to be taken up instead by a legal political movement.

(Interview by Rüdiger Göbel; Translated by Arm The Spirit from 'Junge Welt' - April 22, 1998)



Thoughts On The End Of The Red Army Fraction (RAF)

"We Are Not Political Idiots!"

Rolf Clemens Wagner was a member of the RAF and was arrested in Switzerland in November 1979. Accused of participation in the RAF's abduction and execution of the head of the German Employers' Association, former SS-member Hans-Martin Schleyer, in the fall of 1977, the State Supreme Court in Dusseldorf sentenced him to life in prison in 1985. Due to later statements from RAF defector Werner Lotze, who was arrested in the former East Germany, Wagner was given an additional 12-year prison sentence in November 1993 by the State Supreme Court in Frankfurt. According to Lotze, Wagner also participated in the bomb attack on NATO secretary general Alexander Haig in June 1979. Like most RAF prisoners, Wagner disassociated himself from the RAF's remaining clandestine members in 1993. The impetus for this decision was an unspoken initiative from the RAF, together with some of the prisoners, to win freedom for the prisoners by means of negotiations with representatives of the political and economic establishment. In the name of the other prisoners, including Wagner, Brigitte Mohnhaupt spoke of a "degeneration" and criticized the fact that the pause in armed struggle which they had initiated did not lead to new openings and a re-orientation of radical and revolutionary politics, but rather to adaptation to the system and de-politicization. The following text was sent to Berlin leftist weekly 'Jungle World' by Rolf Clemens Wagner from prison.

Let's start from behind, first of all. I would say that revolutions do occasionally take place, but they actually speak very little.

Least of all here, where they are noticeable in their absence.

There was never a revolution here, there is no revolution here, and there will never be one here in the foreseeable future.

That is the continuity of history, the reality which we must face and the one which we sought to attack with hard means.

But I don't wish to be like the rest of the left, pouring over the communiqué like vines on an old wall. It's bad enough that it has to be interpreted in a fundamentally different situation with a correspondingly different set of interests.

But I can't allow us to be labelled as political idiots without responding.

Yes, we thought, in the configuration of that time, that we had a chance to start something in the metropoles, to launch a dialectical process for liberation. But we never proposed that we, as a small, clandestine group, could "tear down" something with armed struggle alone.

The project was explicitly political-military, the armed struggle was only one element of the praxis, to move away from burdensome ideology and feelings of powerlessness towards real attacks. The concept was broad enough to allow for worthwhile agitation from within a movement. This movement existed, both here and internationally, so I don't need to describe it once again.

In the end, however, a strong fundamental interest prevailed, one which links the majority of the left to "normal" citizens: the desire for a relatively secure and pleasant life (the price one has to pay for this is always left in the background, however). The metropoles are, after all, warm places with many pleasant features. At that time even more so, because there was no "social question" in the narrow sense of the phrase. The economy was booming, there was no mass unemployment, the welfare state was still expanding, the strategic German model. But all this only lasted until the end of the bloc confrontation, then it was no longer needed

and was tossed onto the trash heap of history: now there's "shareholder value" instead of social security.

As for linking with "the social" question, I remember well many wasted early mornings handing out leaflets as the shifts changed at the factories, listening to the harsh tones of rejection we were met with. These thoughts about how it's possible to "wake up" the "desire for emancipation and liberation" in people are completely useless.

To say it anachronistically, it all comes down to the old problem of "class in and of itself" becoming "class for itself". We shouldn't speak of "militaristic" mistakes in the concept, rather a lack of necessary conditions for any emancipatory political approach, not only armed struggle, because in the end all leftist approaches failed, not only the RAF.

OK, so in the 1970s came the slogan "into private life!", into alternative forms of living, back to the universities, back to the "long march" through the institutions. And after a quarter century the marchers have now finally arrived at the center and may now take part in the aggressive project of repositioning Germany.

Perhaps, in fact, "it would have been better if the global wave of revolt, which the RAF was a part of, had been successful". Then maybe we wouldn't be in the mess we are today.

But hypothetical statements are meaningless. Why bother thinking about forms of revolution and proposals from the 19th and 20th centuries when our world has so radically changed in front of our very eyes? Today, practically nothing is the same today as it was ten years ago. It reminds me of Don Quixote (and it has about as much to do with "the social" question as with Dulcinea).

But back to history for a moment. We mustn't forget that following the first real wave of repression in the early 1970s, the "fish in the water" concept was done for good. Before, the RAF could always count on finding open doors. Although there were always one or two who thought it necessary to inform the police.

But now, suddenly, there were unbridgeable political-ideological differences,

and someone needs to try and explain this opportunist movement of rejection, because it is one of the main reasons why almost all of the clandestine members ended up in prison. A few weeks earlier things had looked a little different, not exactly consensus, but at least no one went running to the cops. Later, people gave detailed depictions of RAF actions on the TV.

Safer politics, so to speak.

Due to the "rejection of the position of sympathizer" (Herold), the state organs didn't need to work overtime. After this, the RAF's position was in jeopardy for a long time. The situation forced us to concentrate on building up logistics, and on the prisoners, either to protect them, or if possible to get them out, because their psycho-physical integrity in the state's custody could not be guaranteed (those who like to pass us off as the "free-the-guerrilla guerrilla" never seem interested in that reality, however).

The results of this everyone knows. 1977.

Of course, this concentration was reductive and all of the actions were aimed at the prisoners, which had a negative effect on the actions themselves, and led, among other things, to the wrong decision to hijack an airplane.

The authors of the RAF's dissolution communique now write what they suppressed for years: This reduction and the prominence of armed action continued throughout the 1980s. This prevented things being at the political level, the "social" question was ignored, and this is why a "social revolutionary" component was lacking, and whatever the hell else they wrote.

I'm sick of hearing this bullshit. The real situation was (and probably will always be, to some degree) that there were various different groups and individuals who, although not wanting to directly join the RAF, could envision political cooperation with an armed organization. As far as I could tell, that was no small number of people in the 1980s.

One thing there never was in the history of the RAF (and this came from the experiences in the 1970s) was "social movements", however you choose to define them, who had an interest or, I would say, a need to possibly discuss similar political goals, because they all categorically rejected the use of political violence (a position which never helped their cause, however).

So this fascination with the "social" element can't hide the fact that they are just complaining long and wide about their own inabilities, about no longer being able to continue on a path which they somehow recognized as false, about wanting to seek something new. The reason for this is: They would have wanted it to be the way it was. But before they admit to this, they'd rather say the mistakes were in the concept. No, they weren't "militarist", the mistakes were in the concept, so you can't blame them. Truly pathetic.

It's already been said a few times, but I'll say it one final time: The fact is, that for a long



time in the 1980s there were re-politicization attempts which were made, hard discussions whose initiators gave up on because they did not trust themselves to do actions.

And when the Celle prisoners sought support during this exchange, there came the statement: "One action, then the next one. That's how it goes."

Today, many people can sit around and complain about the hierarchical, authoritarian, militarist structures of the RAF, but the issue of turncoats is by no means a laughing matter.

The fact remains that, since the end of the 1980s, armed struggle - no matter how it transforms or modifies itself - no longer makes any political sense. The conditions are all wrong, the points of reference are lacking. The epidemic use of violence at all levels makes this use of violence as a means in a political struggle ineffective.

And now the final point:

"Following our defeat in 1993, we knew that we couldn't just keep going on as we had been.

(...) We wanted to think things over one more time with those who were in prison, and take a new step together. But in the end, the very hurtful split of one group of the prisoners from us, who declared us to be enemies, completely erased the very conditions which had given rise to the RAF in the first place - solidarity and the struggle for collectivity."

What's that supposed to mean?

It's important to keep some things straight. Defeats, sure, there have been more than enough of those. But why in 1993? What was special about that time? Oh yeah, the Steinmetz Unit, that always seems to be quickly forgotten.

The authors of the last RAF communique don't seem to want to discuss that with us, as far as we can tell. We were always confronted with their papers point blank. Our criticisms of this were seemingly just brushed off until the next one-sided statement appeared.

We declared no one to be our enemy, we never once spoke of a split, rather we matter-

of-factly separated ourselves from people who had begun to advance their particular interests against us (and who now - such a tiresome point - speak of solidarity and collectivity). The authors of the communique seem preoccupied with finding a way out of the vacuum which they got themselves into, and they came up with nothing better than to portray our history as something which it wasn't. I think it's legitimate to refuse to allow that.

And if there's anyone who's had to suffer a defeat in all of this, then surely it's us, the remaining prisoners. We started the "opening", which everyone took their turns at manipulating, and now we are up to our necks in concrete thanks to the "Kinkel Initiative".

For 26 years, if necessary.
Perhaps even a little longer.

Rolf Clemens Wagner
Schwalmstadt, Germany- the end of April 1998

(Translated by Arm The Spirit from 'Jungle World' #20 - May 13, 1998)

A Few Last Words On The End Of The Red Army Fraction (RAF)

Somewhere. In March 1998, the Red Army Fraction (RAF) announced its dissolution after 28 years of armed struggle. This step was an anti-climax, and one long expected, since nothing had been heard of from the RAF for months. Just like the Left in general, the organization had lost its social relevance over the past few years, and it could not be expected that the RAF would provide any impulses for a re-orientation of the Left. But sighs and the shaking of heads are by no means called for.

For 28 years, the RAF was an attempt to wage resistance to the murderous capitalist system and conditions of exploitation. It arose from the correct consciousness of bringing the anti-imperialist struggle of the liberation movements around the world back here, to the center of power. It arose from the realization that the social movements and the guerrilla movements of the Three Continents, which are confronted with U.S. and NATO interventions and the dirty wars being waged by contra-guerrilla forces trained by the BND [German intelligence agency] and the CIA, can only be successful if there is no peaceful calm in the metropoles, in the belly of the beast. The formation of the RAF was the first serious attempt to transform the '68 slogan "Create One, Two, Many Vietnams!" into a reality. This was expressed in the early years mainly in the form of attacks on U.S. military institutions. In the early 1970s, RAF actions, for example the attack on the U.S. Headquarters in Heidelberg, where logistics for air raids on the Vietcong were planned, enjoyed broad, if silent, support. At that time, around 20% of the population were willing to help shelter RAF militants from state repression. So it's no surprise that the repressive authorities in Germany did everything possible to create a social climate in which the RAF and the Left in general could be isolated and defeated. This chance came during the confrontations in 1977. The surveillance

state was prepared to make the most of its searching methods and isolation torture. The political error of the RAF, to approve of the hijacking of a civilian Lufthansa airliner by a Palestinian commando during the Schleyer kidnapping, tipped the balance of public opinion, already heated by media smear campaigns, against the guerrilla once and for all. The pogrom-like atmosphere among the public against the RAF political prisoners gave the government's Crisis Staff the signal it needed: The alleged "suicides" of the prisoners in Stammheim were just a formality following the storming of the airliner by a GSG9 police commando.

The RAF could never recover from its defeat in '77. The state had succeeded in creating a permanent gulf between the guerrilla and a majority of the extra-parliamentary Left, and solidarity from the general public was now completely out of the question. The consciousness that the actions of the guerrilla were only directed at the ruling structures, against those responsible for exploitation, war, and oppression, could no longer be proclaimed. "Anyone who attacks people vacationing on Mallorca would eat their own children..." - it wasn't hard for the ruling powers to make such notions stick in the minds of the people. After this time, only a small portion of the radical Left showed solidarity with RAF actions.

Even the attempts by the RAF in the 1980s, by means of the Front Concept, to link up with radical social movements at the national level and with Action Directe (France) and the Red Brigades (Italy) at the West European level did not make any new beginnings possible. These only exhibited the developments which the RAF themselves criticized in their dissolution communique: The lack of a political-social organization, which needed to have an equal importance as the armed politics of the RAF.

The distance between the actions of the

RAF, who were only becoming more isolated, and the repressive social reality of the class whose liberation the RAF propagated became too great. Unlike the early 1970s, when social relationships played an important role in texts issued by the RAF (for example, with reference to the strike movements in 1971, and "Urban Guerrilla And The Class Struggle" of April 1972), the statements by the new RAF militants hovered at the abstract-militarist level. For people involved in concrete social confrontations, like unemployed people, the Latin America solidarity movement, or anti-fascists, there was little common ground for discussion with the RAF. The attempts by the RAF in the 1990s (the execution of Treuhand chief Rohwedder, the destruction of the new prison in Weiterstadt) to renew a concrete relationship with the social situation in Germany and a dialogue with the Left came too late. The lack of an organizational framework, a political-social organization which would have made such a discussion possible, was a major problem. This mistake was the fault of the entire radical Left, because the RAF never had the chance to build up such an organization while operating underground.

The dissolution of the RAF is a natural result of their history. But it is merely the end of the chapter on the RAF in the history of the revolutionary Left in Germany, not the end of armed struggle for all times. As long as social conditions exist "in which a human being is treated as a dirty, pitiful, abandoned, and hated being", so long as the heart of the beast continues to beat, producing new capitalist barbarity with each new day - the struggle for liberation will continue. The means of this struggle will be decided on by the radical Left, not dictated by their enemies.

(Source: 'Einsatz!' #31 - July 1998 - Translated by Arm The Spirit)